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USCIS breaches H-2B cap nationwide. PAGE 13

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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$50K bail for teen who shot self, brother

By BEA CABRERA
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REPORTER

The 18-year-old teen who accidentally shot himself and his brother while playing with their sister's police-issued firearm has been ordered to post a $50,000 bail after being charged with aggravated assault and battery and unlawful discharge of a firearm during a bail hearing on Monday in Superior Court.

Kody Omengkar wasn't able to post bail and was remanded to the Department of Corrections.

See BAIL on Page 4

HOLIDAY MAKEOVER

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Office on Aging's *man'amko* pose with professional stylists, barbers, and manicurists from different Saipan salons after their recent holiday makeover sponsored by IT&E.

See story on Page 7

DPS bags awards in Christmas Village tilt

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety placed first in several categories in the Lady Diann Torres Christmas Village decoration competition.

A previous *Saipan Tribune* article quoted first lady Diann Torres as saying that DPS set the standard quite high last year, yet it seems DPS stepped their game up further this year. The hard work paid off because the department was awarded first place for two out of three categories.

This year, a total of 28 agencies and organizations competed to win the

See DPS on Page 4

Parents of cosplay model sues

By BEA CABRERA
bea_cabrera@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The parents of a popular cosplay model in China who drowned on Saipan last September filed suit in the CNMI Superior Court early this month.

Dan Liu's father, Zhenjiang Liu, and mother, Hongmei Hou, filed the case against Island Travel Investments, LLC, which does business as Sea Fun Villa. They want mandatory mediation once Sea Fun Villa responds.

Liu came to Saipan in September 2017 at the invitation of Sea Fun Villa.

Liu and her companions stayed

See PARENTS on Page 4

'POSSIBLE BUT NO GUARANTEES'

NMBAC: 13K CW cap possible

BEA CABRERA

On stage are Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp. officer and members, from left, Gloria Cavanagh, Alex Sablan, Viola Alepuyo, and Josephine Mesta at the open discussion Tuesday night at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

By BEA CABRERA
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REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp. is optimistic that the CNMI-Only Transitional Worker program would be extended in the same form or another after 2019, but not in the numbers it has asked for.

During last Tuesday's open discussion at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe, NMBAC officer Viola Alepuyo said the trip to Washington, D.C. was intended to "basically pound the pavement" and have meetings in order to explain to various congressional committees

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LOCAL
The Japan Saipan Travel Association and its tourism partners cleans up Garapan.
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NATION
Construction on a church crushed in the Sept. 11 attacks is suspended.
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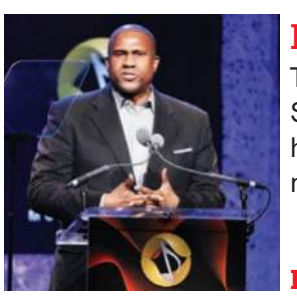

LIFE & STYLE
Talk-show host Tavis Smiley is upset about his depiction in the media.
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at HYATT REGENCY SAIPAN

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31 DECEMBER 2017, 10:30 AM through 2:00 PM

Giovanni's and Kili Café & Terrace
Price: $60 per person, $30 for children
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$40 per person for Club at the Hyatt members

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1 JANUARY 2018, from 6:00 PM through 9:00 PM

Kili Café & Terrace – regular operation
Miyako – regular operation

Teppanyaki
Two seating times at 5:30 PM or 8:00 PM
Price: $150 per person, $45 for children
$120 per person for Club at the Hyatt members

HYATT REGENCY SAIPAN

Local

SNILD passes appropriations totaling $8.5M

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Saipan and Northern Islands Delegation passed last week two separate measures that appropriate a total of $8.5 million from the Exclusive Gaming Annual License Fees allotted for Saipan to infrastructure improvements at Kagman as well as addressing concerns of various government agencies.

Rep. Frank Aguon's (R-Saipan) House Local Bill 20-46, which appropriates a little less than $2.1 million for road improvements on the Kanat Tabla project, Lalangita Road, Lalangha Avenue, Palu Lane, As Teo Road, and Puteng Drive.

During discussions, House Speaker Rafael Demapan (R-Saipan) proposed an amendment to appropriate $122,142 towards the Indigenous Affairs Office.

Rep. Angel A. Demapan's (R-Saipan) House Local Bill 20-49, which sought to appropriate a little over $6.4 million from the Exclusive Gaming Annual License Fees allotted for Saipan to various government agencies.

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would be allotted $2.9 million to address both the turbo-charge retrofitting of four engines as well as the wastewater pretreatment system. The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. was allotted $1.8 million in appropriations for the procurement of new equipment and facility improvements, while $573,290 went to CHCC's workforce needs as well as the corporation's charge service fees to cover the cost of services.

The Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority was appropriated $150,000 while the Saipan Mayor's Office was allotted $460,000 for the purchase of a pay loader, a 2,000-gallon tanker, a roller compactor, and to address the outstanding maintenance equipment rental fees.

A total of $125,000 was allotted to the Division of Agriculture for the Kagman farm plots and Sabalu farmers, for tractor maintenance, and for the procurement of its attachments. Some $25,000 was allotted to the repairs of the Koblerville Youth Center, $40,000 for Karidat Social Services, and $139,000 was allotted to the SNILD.

SNILD chair Rep. John Paul Sablan (R-Saipan) told *Saipan Tribune* in an interview that the reason why the appropriations were separated despite coming from the same source was because it made sense strategically.

"When the communication came to the Legislature from the administration that there is $8.5 million to dispose of, part of the items to be disposed was $2 million for Kagman roads," said Sablan.

"…[Aguon] reviewed the communication from the administration and extracted the amount for Kagman [to] create a standalone bill," he said, adding that according to experience, it was harder to deduct from a standalone bill than a large appropriation bill condensed together and solely for Kagman.

"…it's easier to grab [from a larger appropriation] than from an [appropriation] bill with only one intent," he said.

With SNILD passing both appropriation measures, both H.B. 20-46 and H.L.B. 20-49 now head to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres for enactment.

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Interested individuals who meet the above requirements should submit their resume no later than Tuesday, January 8, 2018.

Resumes may be submitted to the attention of IP&E Human Resources Department.

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Kilili urges employers with denied CW-1 visas to come forward

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) urges business establishments who have had their general maintenance workers' CW-1 visa denied to approach his office for assistance.

In a statement released over the Christmas holiday, Sablan urged business owners to approach his office in Susupe.

"…I strongly encourage any employer who believes that their employees have been erroneously classified as new construction workers to come to the congressional office for assistance," he said in the statement.

Sablan's office is working to reverse U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' decision to deny the CW-1 applications for general maintenance occupations after USCIS deemed this occupation type to be barred after Sablan's H.R. 339 was enacted in mid-2017.

According to Sablan, H.R. 339 specifically applies to construction workers only, which is derived from the U.S. Department of Labor's Standard Occupational Classification Group 47-000, which refers specifically to construction workers and was utilized in the language of H.R. 339.

"Maintenance, repair, utility worker, and many other positions are in entirely different occupational categories and should not be barred from the CW-1 program," said Sablan, adding that bringing forward "specific cases of misclassification" is important because of the difficulty for his office and of USCIS to "address anecdotal complaints, especially since USCIS adjudicates all CW-1 petitions on a case-by-case basis."

According to Sablan, two of three cases of general maintenance employees who got denied have already been reversed while a decision is still pending for the third case.

"Like [Gov. Ralph DLG Torres] and many others, my heart goes out to the workers and employers who have been part of our community for years and helped build our economy. I have worked hard to help them, and I am continuing to do so," said Sablan, adding that there has been "good progress in the bipartisan, bicameral working group in the U.S. Congress."

The working group Sablan was referring to was the group led by U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), who chairs the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and was also reportedly willing to introduce legislation for the extension of the CW-1 program as well as set new parameters for the program.

While Sablan said in previous interviews that nothing solid has been ruled out in the extension and the bill itself has yet to be written, he remains optimistic that the U.S. Congress would rule in favor of extending the program.

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Smoked pot and want to enlist? Army issuing more waivers

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP)—Smoked pot? Want to go to war?

No problem.

As more states lessen or eliminate marijuana penalties, the Army is granting hundreds of waivers to enlist people who used the drug in their youth—as long as they realize they can't do so again in the military.

The number of waivers granted by the active-duty Army for marijuana use jumped to more than 500 this year from 191 in 2016. Three years ago, no such waivers were granted. The big increase is just one way officials are dealing with orders to expand the Army's size.

"Provided they understand that they cannot do that when they serve in the military, I will waive that all day long," said Maj. Gen. Jeff Snow, head of the Army's recruiting command.

The marijuana use exclusions represent about one-quarter of the total misconduct waivers the Army granted in the budget year that ended Sept. 30. They accounted for much of the 50 percent increase overall in recruits who needed a waiver for some type of misconduct.

Snow said the figures probably will rise further as more states legalize or decriminalize marijuana.

Eight states—Alaska, California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Oregon and Washington—and the District of Columbia have fully legalized possession of small amounts of marijuana for adults' recreational use. An additional 13 states have decriminalized it, meaning possession of small amounts is considered the equivalent of a traffic citation or a low-end misdemeanor with no chance of jail. Twenty-nine states, along with Puerto Rico, Guam and Washington, D.C., allow the use of medical marijuana.

Army leaders have faced increased scrutiny in recent weeks amid worries in Congress and elsewhere about a decline in quality among new enlistees.

Army data show more than 8,000 recruits received waivers in 2017, compared with about 6,700 last year. Most waivers concerned physical or mental health.

Almost 2 percent of the recruits were considered "category four," meaning they scored 31 or less, out of 99, on the aptitude test. Just over a half-percent were in that category in 2016.

In total, the Army enlisted almost 69,000 recruits this year, close to 6,000 more than last year.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Snow said he went to his Army leadership early this year to ask if he could bring in more of the category four recruits to meet higher enlistment goals. He said he promised that the Army would stay well below a 4 percent limit on the group allowed by the Pentagon.

Recruits who score lower than 31 on the test must meet specific criteria for the job they are requesting. There is no leeway on previous pot smoking for them. They also can't require a health or conduct waiver.

DPS

From Page 1

most creative, best in theme, and people's choice awards for each of their unique cottage designs displayed at the Lady Diann Torres Foundation Christmas Village.

During the awarding ceremony last Friday, DPS won first place for most creative and for best in theme.

The department built a cottage that was inspired by the Willy Wonka chocolate factory.

The department was awarded $200 cash, two plaques, and chocolates as a gift from the Lady Diann Torres Foundation.

Bank of Guam and Rufina LLC's *Moana*-inspired cottage placed second for most creative and for best in theme and the Department of Fire and Emergency Management Services placed third in both categories and was awarded plaques and chocolates.

The Saipan Mayor's Office's folktale-inspired cottage was awarded the people's choice plum.

The public was encouraged to vote for their favorite cottage every Tuesday from Dec. 5 to 19 and the Saipan Mayor's Office's boot cottage, inspired by the *Old Lady Who Lived in a Shoe* folktale, had the most votes.

According to Torres, the Saipan Mayor's Office was awarded $200, a plaque, and chocolates.

Torres said that overall, the village did greater this year compared to last year because there were bigger crowds and it was even offered as part of a Christmas package for tour agencies, resulting in tourist visits.

Torres said the village hours were also extended to accommodate the many people who came to visit late in the evening.

Originally, the village lighting hours were from 6pm to 9pm on the weekdays and from 6pm to 11pm on the weekends. The foundation extended it from 6pm to 11pm on the weekdays and from 6pm to 6am on the weekends.

Torres looks forward to the contest in the following years.

The Lady Diann Torres Foundation Christmas Village will be taken down on Jan. 9, 2018.

PARENTS

From Page 1

at the villa. On Sept. 25, she and her companions went swimming in the villa's pool. While in the pool, it started to rain accompanied by strong winds. The strong movement of the water pushed Liu away from the edge of the pool into the deeper side while her companions were able to stay on the edge of the pool. Liu and her companions were non-swimmers and, when Liu was struggling, nobody was able to help.

One of the companions called for help, which caught the attention of the hotel housekeeper who then called the caretaker. The caretaker came out with a long pole and, together with another hotel guest, worked to pull Liu out of the pool.

Other hotel guests gave cardio-pulmonary resuscitation to Liu who was already unconscious. An ambulance arrived and brought Liu to the hospital but she died the next day.

The complaint stated wrongful death as a first cause of action due to a breach of contract. The plaintiffs stated that when Liu was invited to come to Saipan and stay at Sea Fun Villa, the company agreed to provide hotel accommodations and a relaxing atmosphere that would extend to recreational facilities within the villa.

The suit accused the company of failing to inform Liu of the depth of the pool because no adequate signs were posted around the pool. There were no handrails, safety devices, life-saving equipment, and the defendants failed to designate a competent person to supervise swimming activities, it said.

A second cause of action is based on negligence, saying the company failed to employ a lifeguard who should be on duty when the swimming pool is open for use.

In the event that the mandatory mediation is unsuccessful, plaintiffs will pursue a full-blown civil case for damages and demand a jury trial. The model's parents are represented by David Banes.

The company is required to file an answer to the complaint in the coming days.

NMBAC

From Page 1

what the CNMI has done in the past and what the government and private sector need going forward with regards to the CW issue.

"What we did get from them is, yes, they understand that we need CWs… but we won't get the 18,000 workers that was one of our requests. They also said they realize that the current number of 9,998, after the 3,000 reduction, wasn't enough," she said.

Alepuyo said they were informed that 13,000 slots is a possible number but there are no guarantees.

"We explained to them that 13,000 is much appreciated but this number will only help us maintain the status quo, to keep things the way they are right now. It's not going to address what's going to happen with the workforce [that] we [will] need once Honest Profit hotel in San Antonio, the IPI hotel and casino in Garapan, and Michael Kwan's [hotel] in San Roque opens," she said.

Alepuyo said these new hotel projects are additional rooms for the CNMI's booming hospitality industry. However, with no workers, what would hotel owners do with those rooms, she asked.

"Again, we appreciate the 13,000 slots but it's not enough to grow our economy," she added.

NMBAC president Alex Sablan said the 18,000 request is based on room counts and current developments that are being built in the CNMI.

"That number was a product of us going through all of the projects and establishing what the numbers are going to be room for room. Currently, as per the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, the number is 0.7 to headcount per room, so there's under one individual or three fourths of an individual," he said.

"But the future holds that, with 4- and 5-star developments that are coming, we will need at least 1 to 1 or 1.5 to one room headcount and that is based on the projections being tossed out. We have Alter City [Group] that is looking at 2,000 to 3,000 rooms and we have the IPI contract with the government based on law that requires them to put up at least 2,000 rooms," he added.

In an interview last October, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres shared this concern when only a certain number of contract workers are maintained in the CNMI.

"If we only maintain that, that means our economy can only grow that much. It's a steady economy because of our labor. But if we do not increase labor, our economy will also not increase," he said.

'Not enough workers'

During NMBAC's meetings with various committees of the House and Senate, the group emphasized that there is just not enough U.S. citizens or U.S-eligible workers to go around in the CNMI.

"We brought data that we have requested from the CNMI government… they wanted to know what exactly the government and the business community have done in the past to transition foreign workers out and get U.S. citizens the jobs," Alepuyo said.

"We did that in a report that we submitted to them. We explained that even if we gave every U.S. citizen who is not employed a job, it's still not enough and it still would not address the workforce necessary in the CNMI," she added.

Alepuyo said that even the U.S. Government Accountability Office, an independent government agency, came out and said the CNMI cannot survive without the CW program.

The GAO report released in May 2017 stated that the labor market of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is growing and continues to rely on foreign workers. In 2015, foreign workers made up more than half of the CNMI's workforce.

The GAO report further stated that the Department of Homeland Security aims to eliminate all CW permits that allow foreign nationals to work in CNMI by the end of 2019. However, the agency's economic analysis estimated that, without foreign workers, the CNMI's 2015 gross domestic product would be reduced by 26-62 percent.

Alepuyo said the 62-percent drop in the CNMI economy is not a simple matter.

BAIL

From Page 1

Omengkar's preliminary hearing is set on Jan. 4, 2018, at 1:30pm; arraignment is scheduled on Jan. 8, 2018, at 9am.

K9 officer Anthony Alepuyo was traveling west on Chalan Monsignor Guerrero at approximately 3:17pm last Thursday, Dec. 21, when, just past the Twin's Supermarket, he saw a grey-colored SUV swerve onto the outer lane with brakes flashing on and off. Alepuyo drove next to the vehicle and asked if everything was okay. The driver of the SUV, later identified as Klyde Omengkar Camacho, asked the officer if it was okay to pull over.

On the shoulder of the highway, Alepuyo approached the vehicle and was told by Camacho to call an ambulance. The officer noticed that the front passenger, identified as Kory Omengkar, was holding his chest and leaning on the front passenger door. When Alepuyo asked what was going on, Kory Omengkar said, "It's a gunshot wound."

According to Alepuyo, Kory Omengkar and his brother, Kody Omengkar, sustained gunshot wounds and were brought by the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services to the Commonwealth Health Center for treatment.

The gun involved in the incident was a .40 caliber Glock .22. The weapon was issued to police officer Jaimie Omengkar, sister of Kory and Kody, and the SUV also belonged to her.

According to Klyde Camacho, who was the driver, the three were at Jaimie Omengkar's home in San Roque when Klyde Omengkar asked to borrow her car to get something to eat.

Camacho, along with Kory and Kody, drove to Twin's Supermarket in Dandan to buy food and left. A few seconds after getting into Chalan Monsignor Guerrero, Camacho heard a loud bang inside the car and saw Kory holding the left side of his chest, saying his back is feeling numb.

Kory sustained a two-and-a-half inch laceration on the left side of his chest as a result of the gunshot wound. He is now in stable condition at CHC.

Kody's recollection of events started with the three of them leaving San Roque to buy food at Twin's Supermarket. He picked up Jamie Omengkar's police-issued belt on the floor to place it on the seat before disengaging the thumb safety of the weapon holster and pulling out the weapon.

Kody admitted playing with the gun and pulling the trigger several times. He said that Klyde and Kory became mad at him for touching the weapon so he put it back in the holster.

However, after leaving Twin's Supermarket, Kody said he pulled the trigger again, causing the weapon to discharge. The bullet grazed his leg and shot into the back of his brother, Kory, who was seated in the front passenger seat.

Kody was treated for his injuries but was later discharged.

As of press time, no charges has been filed against Jaimie Omengkar, but according the Department of Public Safety, she resigned on the same day of the incident, Dec. 21.

The bail hearing was held at the courtroom of Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho.

NMIS wins bevy of awards in Christmas in the Marianas

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Teachers, staff, and management of Northern Marianas International School pose with their awards after the Christmas in the Marianas Awards Night.

All smiles after receiving the second place award for the Recycled Christmas Tree Competition.

Team NMIS with their hard-earned awards.

Northern Marianas International School grabbed major awards in the recently concluded Christmas in the Marianas 2017.

NMIS came in second in the Recycled Christmas Tree Competition, second in the Recycled Christmas Float Competition, third place in the Caroling Competition (Middle School Division), and fourth place in the Caroling Competition (Elementary Division).

The Marianas Visitors Authority and other organizers of the Christmas in The Marianas celebration hold the Christmas in the Marianas annually for tourists and the local community alike. ***(PR)***

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP18-GOV-027
TINIAN MUNICIPAL TRANSFER STATION EQUIPMENT

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Victor B. Hocog through the Capital Improvement Program Office (collectively, "Commonwealth") are soliciting competitive sealed proposals according to the requirements of Northern Mariana Islands Administrative Code (NMIAC) §70-30.3-210 from qualified vendors to provide equipment for use at the Tinian Municipal Transfer Station on Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Proposal procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, currently in effect, and with the NMIAC §70-30-3-725 Gratuities and Kickbacks and §70.30.3-730 Prohibition Against Contingent Fees. All wage rates for employees performing the work, labor and services on this project shall be paid at the current U.S. prevailing wage rates established for the CNMI.

Proposals are to include costs associated with equipment, training, extended warranty, delivery, maintenance, as identified in specifications. The Commonwealth is relying on the expertise of vendors in the selection of most appropriate equipment for use in the proposed transfer station.

The specific pieces of equipment sought are the following:
1. Fork Lift
2. Skid Steer Loader w/Clam Bucket and Fork Attachment
3. Baler
4. Press Machine

Submitted proposals will be evaluated on a possible 100 points based on the following factors:
20 points - Qualification & Experience of Vendor
40 points - Price
20 points - Maintenance Program
20 points - Factory Warranty

All proposers will be subject to a responsibility determination as identified in NMIAC § 70-30.3-245 (Responsibility of Bidders and Offerors) which will evaluate whether the vendor has experience and resources for the required financing, warranty, and maintenance services. Proposals from parties who fail to meet the requirements of the Responsibility Determination will not be considered. All responses to this RFP should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the applicant awarded a contract. The applicant selected will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with NMIAC 70-30.3-245 of the CNMI Procurement Regulations.

Award shall be made to the responsible offeror whose proposal conforms to the solicitation and is determined in writing to be the most advantageous to the Commonwealth taking into consideration price and the evaluation factors set forth in the Request for Proposals.

Proposals should address each item identified in the evaluation structure and must follow the proposal structure as identified in the proposal package. Proposal package will be available on December 5, 2017 at Office of Capital Improvement - Juan A. Sablan Administration Building - Capitol Hill, Saipan. Proposals must pay particular attention to the preferred identified equipment specification and use this as a guide in submission of proposals. **A pre-proposal meeting regarding this project will be held on December 12, 2017, 10:00 a.m. ChST, at the Governor's Office Conference Room in Capitol Hill.**

All questions regarding the RFP must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. on December 20, 2017 (ChST) to the Office of Capital Improvement via fax to (670) 664-2408 or email to Ms. Nerissa Benavente at nerissa.cip@gmail.com. Prospective bidders bear responsibility for proper transmission and receipt of submitted questions. Response to questions shall be shared with all prospective proposers.

The selected vendor will be required to comply with all applicable Commonwealth and Federal laws. All proposals must be sealed and marked R**FP18-GOV-027 Tinian Municipal Transfer Station** Equipment on the forms provided. Provide one original and four copies and to be submitted no later than 10:00 a.m., Monday, January 8, 2018 ChST to the Director of Procurement and Supply located at the former Emergency Management Office, Building No. 1301, Ascencion Drive, Capitol Hill. Proposers located outside the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their proposal by submitting a Notice of intent to propose. Notices of intent to propose must be received by the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than 10:00 a.m. ChST, Monday, January 8, 2018 and may be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to procurement@pticom.com.

For proposers located outside the CNMI, one original and three (3) copies of the sealed proposals must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than, January 8, 2018, and must be received by the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than January 17, 2018. Failure to submit the required number of copies of the proposal may be cause for rejection of a proposal.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive any imperfection in any proposal if, in its opinion to do so would be in the best interests of the CNMI government.

Victor B. Hocog, Acting Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Herman S. Sablan, Director
Director of Procurement & Supply

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-17-038, Rev. 1

Electric Power Pole Mitigation Project
(Revised December 27, 2017)

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms to perform mitigation of the CUC power distribution system through the replacement of 374 wood poles to concrete poles in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project entails the replacement of 103 units of 35-foot and 271 units of 40-foot wood poles to concrete poles and the assembly of electrical hardware. The work site is to take place across CUC's power grid.

This project is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the approval for project award from the CUC and FEMA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **171 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-17-038, Rev. 1, Electric Power Pole Mitigation Project",** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 26, 2018** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). ***Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.***

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered Prospective Bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 10, 2018** to Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Purchasing Officer- via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Adrian Reyes, CUC Power Jr. Electrical Engineer – via email address adrian.reyes@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, CUC Purchasing Assistant-via email address marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and to waive any defects in said bid documents, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN, JR.
Purchasing Officer

Korean association hosts luncheon for *man'amko*

KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA

Members of the Korean Women's Association pose for a photo during the *man'amko* luncheon they prepared yesterday at the Office on Aging.

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Korean Women's Association hosted their annual Christmas luncheon for the *man'amko* yesterday at the Office on Aging.

About seven women from the association served the *man'amko* food and distributed Korean beauty products.

According to association member Simon Song, the event is nothing new because the association strives to give back to the community and the *man'amko* are near and dear to their hearts.

According to Office on Aging program coordinator Orlando Limes, the association consistently provides services for the *man'amko* and the holidays is no exception. For years the Korean Women's Association has brought holiday cheer to the Office on Aging through the distribution of gifts and throwing the *man'amko* a Christmas luncheon. A couple of times every month, the association provides free haircuts to the elderly.

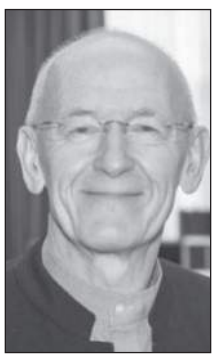
According to Saipan Seniors Advisory Council president Teresita Sorrozo, the *man'amko*, including herself, are grateful for the care and support the Korean Women's Association shows the *man'amko*.

The *man'amko* received gifts, a buffet of Korean cuisine, and were graced with the company of the members of the association.

ANNUAL TRADITION KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA

Over 70 senior citizens take part in a Christmas luncheon sponsored by the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan last Thursday at the Hibiscus Hall.

MTEC Tourism Summit on Jan. 25


Jones

van Gils

Marciano

The Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit for CNMI Public School System's MY WAVE (Marianas Youth Welcome All Visitors Enthusiastically) Club students on Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018, at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan will feature a full lineup of on- and off-island speakers speaking on the theme "Live Your Culture, Love All Cultures."

This year's keynote speaker will be Andrew Jones, guardian of Sanctuary Resorts and the immediate past chairman of Pacific Asia Travel Association.

Jones grew up in the hotel business as his parents managed country inns and restaurants in the United Kingdom. Over the past 45 years, he has worked in numerous senior management and corporate positions for prestigious hotels, resorts and management companies in London, Bermuda, Canada, Hong Kong, and across Asia.

In 1996, Jones founded and became the guardian of Sanctuary Resorts, a resort management company creating responsible and sustainable tourism experiences where people rejuvenate their body, mind, and spirit in an environmentally-friendly space.

Jones is also an active member of the board of trustees for the PATA Foundation, advisor on CSR and Responsible and Sustainable Tourism for PATA, and a member of the World Travel Market World Responsible Tourism Day Advisory Panel.

A certified hotel administrator of the American Hotel and Lodging Association and a fellow of the Institute of Hospitality, Jones was previously a member of the board of the Indian Ocean Tourism Organization and director, Asia Pacific Affairs for the International Hotel and Restaurant Association.

Jones said he believes in directly contributing to the community in which he lives and is chairman emeritus of the KELY (Kids Everywhere Like You) Support Group, a past president of the Rotary Club of Kowloon, and a supporter of numerous other charitable organizations and social ventures in Hong Kong.

The students will also hear from Gerard van Gils, 2017 CNMI Teacher of the Year as well as the 2017 Pacific Educator of the Year.

van Gils is the founder of the Mentor for a Meal events, which have provided hundreds of high school students one-on-one professional mentorship. He also founded the Million Dollar Scholars, which has helped send more than 40 students to universities on more than $4 million in scholarship awards over the last two years.

Additional speakers will also include co-owner and managing director Gordon Marciano of tour company Pacific Development, Inc. Marciano has been with PDI since 1991 and has been instrumental in the company's work to market the Marianas, organize youth cultural exchange programs, promote indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian cultures to visitors, facilitate culture- based weddings, and conduct World War II historic tours. Marciano also serves with numerous community organizations, including the Chamolinian Cultural Village, Canoe Federation, 500 Sails, Northern Marianas Humanities Council, Festival of Pacific Arts, and more.

"We're looking forward to presenting an exciting lineup of speakers at the summit for students from the MY WAVE Clubs (Marianas Youth Welcome All Visitors Enthusiastically) as they expand their knowledge of our tourism industry," said MTEC chair Vicky Benavente. "The tourism summit's speakers will share how a strong reputation of culture and tourism working hand-in-hand benefits a destination. We feel this is a very positive message for our students in terms of economy, community, and daily living in the Marianas."

The summit is expected to gather nearly 300 MY WAVE Club members to learn more about tourism, with special emphasis on the unique aspects of the Marianas for heritage or cultural tourism.

The summit is also sponsored by T Galleria, Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan, Kanoa Resort, and the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The following offices and organizations will also provide hands-on demonstrations at breakout stations during the summit: Marianas Visitors Authority, Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance, and Northern Marianas Trades Institute.

MTEC was formed in 2002 to heighten the community's awareness of the importance of tourism to the wellbeing of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands. MTEC's stated mission is threefold: to foster community understanding and support of the visitor industry; educate the general public, especially school students, about the value, social benefits, and economic contributions made to the community by the visitor industry; and to instill, improve and promote the "Hafa Adai-Tirow" hospitality spirit throughout the island community. ***(MVA)***

IT&E treats *man'amko* to holiday makeover

Keeping with its annual tradition for the sixth consecutive year, IT&E recently treated the island's *man'amko* to stylish makeovers, in time for the yearly CNMI Office on Aging holiday program.

The *man'amko* got free manicure, pedicure, haircut, hair color, and other styling services so that they can look their best for their holiday performances and programs.

"In addition to many other activities that IT&E is organizing to spread the holiday cheer throughout the CNMI, this is one of the most special events that we look forward to hosting every year," said IT&E general manager Rose A. Soledad.

"Our *man'amko* have done so much for our islands and have greatly contributed to the growth and education of our current and future leaders," Soledad added. "The makeovers are only a small treat to help recognize their significant contributions to the community and to make them feel extra special this holiday season."

IT&E enlisted the assistance of professional stylists, barbers, and manicurists from different Saipan salons.

"The most wonderful part of the makeover sessions is seeing the big smiles and seeing the *man'amko* have fun as they pose with their new hairstyles and manicured nails," Soledad said.

Soledad expressed her gratitude to the staff members of the CNMI Office on Aging for their help in coordinating the event. ***(PR)***

Spring AHEAD!

Register Today for NMC's 2018 Spring Semester

Registration for New, Ongoing, and Readmitted Students:
December 14, 2017 – January 12, 2018
Register Online via Proa Portal

Spring 2018 Admission Application Deadline: (New Students)
December 31, 2017

Students Orientation for New, Returning, and International Students:
January 8 – 9, 2018

First Day of Class:
January 16, 2018

Math & English Placement Exam Dates:
December 28
January 2 – 4, & 8 – 11

English placement test starts at 10:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Math placement test starts at 10:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Call 237-6774 to make an appointment.

NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE

For more information, log on to www.marianas.edu or contact the Office of Admissions and Records at 237-6768/6769/6771

www.facebook.com/NMC.Proa
www.twitter.com/GoProa
www.instagram.com/NMC.Proa

MVA joins Shenzhen International Tourism Expo

On Dec.1-3, 2017, the Marianas Visitors Authority joined hands with Century Tours, Shenzhen Professional Int'l Travel Service, and HK Express to participate in the 4th Shenzhen International Tourism Expo. This was the first time the MVA has participated in the SITE.

China SITE at Shenzhen Convention & Exhibition attracted over 420 exhibitors from more than 40 countries and regions, reaching 85,567 expo visitors, include trade buyers, other trade representatives, and consumers.

"As the sole professional and authoritative international tourism industry event in Shenzhen, SITE was a great opportunity for the MVA to reach residents of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao and bring some fresh island style to the exhibition," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "This large geographic area, known famously as the Pearl River Delta, has over 150 million residents so it was important for the MVA to participate to reach this massive audience. We appreciate the strong support of our tourism partners in China, and this exhibition gave us an opportunity to reinforce existing partnerships and exchange views with a wide range of other potential partners in mainland China. We are very optimistic about the future development of the market and will continue to work to make Saipan, Tinian, and Rota the first island destination of choice for the China market."

Nearly 230,000 mainland Chinese tourists visited the Marianas last fiscal year, accounting for 35 percent of total visitor arrivals.

Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hangzhou and Hong Kong have non-stop flights to Saipan, while nearly 20 cities across the country have opened transit flights to the destination.

The Marianas is the only American territory offering Chinese tourists a visa- free policy, which has greatly benefited the tourism industry. ***(MVA)***

Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion, seventh from right, joins the opening ceremony of Shenzhen International Tourism Expo on Dec. 1, 2017, in China. MVA

The Marianas Visitors Authority and its tourism partners join the Shenzhen International Tourism Expo on Dec. 1-3, 2017, in China to promote the Marianas to the estimated 85,000 visitors at the event. MVA

Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion addresses Shenzhen International Tourism Expo on Dec. 1, 2017, in China. MVA

Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion heads the Marianas delegation promoting Saipan, Tinian, and Rota at Shenzhen International Tourism Expo on Dec. 1, 2017, in China. From left are Concepcion, MVA marketing specialist Laura Hsiao, MVA China Travel Trade manager Flo Shi, and MVA China marketing manager Ben Liu. MVA

JSTA leads holiday cleanup in Garapan

In preparation for higher visitor arrivals during Christmas and New Year's, the Japan Saipan Travel Association and its tourism partners conducted a cleanup of the main tourist district of Garapan on Dec. 23, 2017.

Fifty-two volunteers from 20 companies and offices joined the cleanup beginning at 6:30am. Volunteers, including many children, spread out and cleaned up along both the roadside and the beach from American Memorial Park to the Carolinian Affairs Office.

Joining JSTA in the beautification effort were the Consular Office of Japan, Marianas Visitors Authority, Northern Marianas Dive Operators Association, Aqua Blue, Aqua Connections, CMLC, Divesite With, Himawari Kenbukan, HIS Saipan Inc, Kan Pacific, KCA Corp., Make Sure Diving, Marianas Sports Club, Oleai Beach Bar and Grill, Pacific Development Inc., Pacific Eagle, Pacific Micronesia Tours, SNE Saipan, and Tasi Tours and Transportation.

The cleanup effort netted over 100 lbs of trash, compared to 150 lbs collected in 2017 during the same holiday cleanup. ***(MVA)***

A child volunteer for the Japan Saipan Travel Association annual cleanup of downtown Garapan on Dec. 23, 2017, receives a Saipan-da backpack from the Marianas Visitors Authority and other gifts. MVA

Over 50 representatives of 20 local businesses and offices joined the Japan Saipan Travel Association in their annual cleanup of downtown Garapan on Dec. 23, 2017, in preparation for more tourists arriving during the holiday season. MVA

NMI, Guam ink cooperation accord

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A non-binding memorandum of understanding between Guam and the CNMI outlines a plan for both U.S. jurisdictions to work together on issues that affect both areas such as immigration and tourism.

Guam Gov. Eddie B. Calvo and CNMI Gov. Ralph DLG Torres signed the MOU in mid-December. Torres, who described the MOU as a first for both U.S. jurisdictions, dropped by neighboring Guam on his way back to the CNMI after going to Washington, D.C. in early December, to meet with Calvo and Guam Lt. Gov. Ray Tenorio to discuss the MOU. Torres also spoke at a University of Guam graduation ceremony.

"[The MOU] is an understanding and agreement that we are both going to fight for issues [pertaining] to both territories," Torres said in an interview, adding that the MOU would focus on fighting for issues in which both Guam and the NMI benefits mutually.

According to Torres, those concerns include labor, economic growth, and free trade.

"I am really happy that the [Guam governor and lieutenant governor] have continued to seek ways to benefit both territories, especially…at the federal system," he said. "We would continue to work on CW-1 [visa] issues and H2 [visa] issues."

Rep. Ivan A. Blanco (R-Saipan), who was also present at the MOU signing, believes that when both island territories work together, more could be gained.

"Both Guam and the CNMI gain when we both contribute together. This MOU ensures that we work together on multilateral issues common to our island governments and our people," he said.

According to Blanco, Guam Sen. Wil Castro was present during the MOU signing as well. While Lt. Gov. Victor B. Hocog played a "huge part" in "making the MOU happen," Hocog had to attend to other meetings.

CNMI high court affirms trial court's decision to deny Val Hocog's motion

On Dec. 21, 2017, the NMI Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands v. Victor Val B. Hocog*, 2017 MP 15.

Oral arguments in this matter were held at Kagman High School on Feb. 13, 2017. The high court affirmed the trial court's order to deny Victor Val B. Hocog's motion to reconsider.

Hocog pleaded guilty to illegal possession of a controlled substance. He agreed to 15 months imprisonment, a $2,000 fine, and 30 months rehabilitation. Hocog appealed his case past the filing deadline for the high court to review the trial court's judgment of conviction and commitment order, but within the time to review the reconsideration order. He argued there was an abuse of discretion when the trial court ignored three errors noted in his motion to reconsider: (1) illegally imposing rehabilitation as a punishment, (2) violating the separation of powers guaranteed by the NMI Constitution, and (3) improperly interfering with plea negotiations.

The high court reviewed the trial court's reconsideration order for abuse of discretion. It determined the trial court did not abuse its discretion in finding no clear error in its decision that rehabilitation was not an illegal provision. Rather, rehabilitation may be allowed as a condition of a plea agreement. The high court declined to review whether a defendant may be sentenced to rehabilitation under the statute because, rather than being sentenced, Hocog made a voluntary plea agreement. The high court also concluded there was no abuse of discretion in finding no clear error in its decision that Hocog's sentence did not violate separation of powers principles. Hocog's sentence did not limit the Legislature's power to create punishments or expand the Office of Attorney General's power to prosecute punishments. Finally, the high court determined the trial court was correct in its determination that it did not impermissibly participate in plea negotiations.

As a result, the high court affirmed the reconsideration order. The court's full opinion is available at http://www.cnmilaw.org/supreme17.html

For further information, contact the Supreme Court at 236-9800. ***(PR)***

Scheduled power outage on Dec. 30

There will be a scheduled power interruption on Saturday, Dec. 30, from 7:30am to 12:30pm to allow Commonwealth Utilities Corp. line crew to safely replace three wooden power poles with concrete poles along Chalan Tun Thomas P. Sablan in San Antonio.

This is part of an ongoing Hazard Mitigation Project that involves replacing 787 wood poles with concrete poles. A total of 325 wood poles have already been replaced. The remaining 462 wood poles will be scheduled for replacement at a later time.

Areas to be affected include the Kiya 2 line of Chalan Tun Thomas P. Sablan in Chalan Piao (Sherwood, Hopwood Middle School, Subway, Mobil Chalan Piao, Gold Ribbon, and Da Bao), Atuhong P1., Alupyang Pl., Juan Nong St., Hamalap Ln., and San Isidro Av.

The A-4 wastewater lift station will be affected but not water wells. The Chalan Piao traffic light will be affected.

Because of the scale of work that will be performed, CUC asks travelers to take alternate routes or to exercise caution when driving through the affected areas.

For more information, contact the CUC Customer Call Center (664-4282) or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates. ***(CUC)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

INVITATION FOR BID

(This ad is paid for by NMHC with HUD funds.)

BID SUBMISSION DATE: Tuesday, February 06, 2018 • TIME: 10:00 AM

NMHC IFB 2018-001

Building Maintenance of NMHC's Housing Units in Tinian (20 units)

Proposal packets will be available on **January 02, 2018**, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan or the Tinian Field Office in San Jose, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays.

The provisions of the CNMI Procurement regulations, NMIAC 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A **Mandatory Pre-Bid conference** will be held at 10:00 a.m. on January 24, 2018, at the NMHC Tinian Field Office, San Jose, Tinian.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Acting Office Manager, at (670)234-6866/7689 during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ Ignacio L. Perez
Chairman, NMHC Board of Directors

/s/ Herman S. Sablan, Director
Division of Procurement & Supply

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building
P.O. Box 501220 CK • Saipan, MP 96950-1220
Telephone: (670) 664-4282 • Facsimile: (670) 235-5131

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the Open Government Act (1 CMC §9901 et seq), and pursuant to the CUC By-laws approved on January 28, 2015, the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation ("CUC") Board of Directors hereby informs the general public that the Board will hold its regular meeting on **Tuesday, January 2, 2018, at 10:00 a.m.** The meeting will be held at the CUC Conference Room, Room 17, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building to consider the following agenda. Public attendance is welcome.

AGENDA*

I. **Preliminary Matters**
 A. Call to Order
 B. Roll Call
 C. Adoption of Agenda
 D. Adoption of the Minutes
  1. December 5, 2017 Regular Board Meeting
 E. Correspondence
II. **Public Comments****
III. **Management Reports**
 A. Executive Director
 B. Deputy Executive Director
 C. Chief Financial Officer
 D. Legal Counsel
IV. **Old Business**
 1. CHCC Billing Dispute
 2. Site Assessment Report – Former Tinian Power Plant
V. **New Business**
 1. Approval of Public Information Officer and Chief of Administration Positions
VI. **Executive Session*****
 (Consultation with Legal Counsel Re Personnel and Other Matters)
VII. **Announcements**
VIII. **Adjournment**

* Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Agenda maybe modified during the meeting.
** Public comments are limited to 30 minutes and each remark is limited to three minutes. Everyone is welcome to submit written comments.
*** Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Board of Directors may vote to meet in executive session at any time.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB18-DLNR/DFW-038
SUBMISSION/OPENING DATE: JANUARY 24, 2018 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"PURCHASE OF TWO (2) THERMAL IMAGING CAMERAS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LANDS & ANTURAL RESOURCES, DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ANTHONY T. BENAVENTE
SECRETARY, DLRN

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Secretary of Public Works
2nd Floor Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan, MP 96950

INVITATION FOR BIDS
DPW-18-IFB-007

SUPPLY, DELIVERY & INSTALLATION OF NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT FOR PAUPAU BEACH PARK SAN ROQUE, SAIPAN

Governor Ralph Dlg. Torres and Lt. Governor Victor B. Hocog, through the Department of Public Works (DPW) are soliciting sealed bids for **Supply, Delivery & Installation of New Playground Equipment for Paupau Beach Park San Roque, Saipan** Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

The project package will be available on or after December 21, 2017 at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

Bidding procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations currently in effect."

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITUES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

There will be a Pre-bid Conference for this project on **January 9, 2018, 9:00 a.m. local time** at the project site, Saipan. All questions regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **January 12, 2018** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

Sealed bids must be marked **"DPW-18-IFB-007"**. For bidders within the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Office of the Director of Procurement and Supply, located at the former Emergency Management Office, Ascencion Drive, Building No. 1301, Capitol Hill, Saipan, no later than **10:00 a.m. local time January 22, 2018**. Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional Seven (7) working days for receipt of their bids by submitting a Notice of Intent to bid. Notices of Intent to bid must be received by the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than **10:00 a.m. local time, January 22, 2018**, and must be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to procurement@pticom.com. For bidders located outside the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **January 22, 2018** and the BID documents must be received at the Office of the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than **January 31, 2018**. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly opened and read at the Office of the Director of Procurement and Supply, located at the former Emergency Management Office, Ascencion Drive, Building No. 1301, Capitol Hill, Saipan, at **10:00 a.m. local time, February 2, 2018**. However, if no notices of intent to bid were received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will be opened at **11:00 a.m. local time, on January 22, 2018**.

For bids greater than Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars **($25,000.00)** a bid security of fifteen (15%) of the bid amount must accompany the bid. **Bid security shall be on a bid bond, in cash, by certified check, cashiers check or other form acceptable to the government. A surety company shall hold the certificate of authority from the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety requiring approval of the Attorney General must be pre-approved prior to bid submission.** Checks must be made payable to the CNMI Treasurer, with the name of the bidder and a notation on the face of the check: "Credit Account No. 44660". If a bid bond is submitted it must be accompanied by an Insurer Clearance Certification (ICC).

The bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations **§70-30.3-245**. The responsible bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be awarded a contract with the CNMI Government and will be required to deliver Performance and Payment bonds, each equal to 100% of the contract price for contracts greater than $25,000.00. Prior to the execution of the contract, the selected contractor shall submit:

a) A current license from the bonding company showing that it has authority to issue bond in the CNMI, and
b) A certification from the bonding company that the unencumbered value of its assets (exclusive of all outstanding commitments on other bond obligations) exceed the penal amount of each bond.

A contractor submitting an unacceptable payment or performance bond may be permitted a reasonable time, as determined by the P&S Director, to substitute an acceptable bond prior to executing a contract.
Acceptable assets are only:

1) Cash
2) US Gov't Securities
3) Stocks and Bonds traded on US Security Exchange
4) Real Property owned in fee simple in US; and
5) Irrevocable Letters of Credit

Performance time for completion of this project is **Ninety (90) calendar days** upon issuance of Notice to Proceed. Liquidated damages for delays beyond the established completion date will be assessed at the rate of **One Hundred (US$100.00)** for each and every day the work is delayed beyond the established completion date.

All bid documents received shall become the sole property of the CNMI Government. The Government reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any imperfection in a bid proposal that does not affect the elements of price, quantity, and delivery of the bid, in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

JAMES A. ADA
Secretary of Public Works

HERMAN S. SABLAN
Director of Procurement & Supply

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

Tough talk won't cut crime

Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who's held on to his job despite incurring the wrath of President Donald Trump, is apparently trying to curry favor with his boss and play to the right wing of the Republican base by returning to a tried and true GOP mantra: Get tough on crime.

OK. Quickly now, may we see all the hands of those, elected and not, who are opposed to getting tough on crime, who want to rock violent criminals to sleep, who think murderers are picked on far too much? Ummm.. don't see any hands, there.

And had Sessions taken a survey during an appearance in Charlotte Monday—the Queen City has suffered a crime spike—he wouldn't have seen any, either.

There does not exist a politician or citizen who does not want to get tough on crime. Violent criminals should be punished, locked up, prosecuted to the full capability of the legal system. Habitual property criminals need to be off the streets. Drug dealers who prey on the young or the increasing numbers of opioid addicts should go away for long periods of time, if not forever.

But Sessions' announcement of a partnership to fight crime, joining federal, state and local law enforcement groups, was long on punishment and short on going after the causes of crime.

Unfortunately, Republicans long ago captured the "tough on crime" stance and have used it as a political marketing ploy ever since. But their solutions are few. Very few.

Though year after year, decade after decade, poverty and horrid home lives and a lack of any rehabilitation have been shown as causing upsurges in crime, programs to try to turn lives around have been few and far between. Instead, the GOP theme has been to throw more people in jail.

Yes, indeed, one of the promises Sessions made in Charlotte was to tout more prosecutors and engage in tough talk about how the Trump administration "has your back"—that comment being directed at law enforcement officers.

Well and good, because criminals do need to be caught and jailed. But consider the more reasoned and realistic comments from Jake Sussman, who once was an attorney in Charlotte and now directs Harvard University's Fair Punishment Project.

"The tough-on-crime, racially tinged policies of the 1980s fueled mass incarceration but did not make us safer," he said. Instead, Sussman suggested that government ought to look at the causes of crime and treating people who have been criminals or are at risk of becoming criminals for things like drug addiction and the mental health problems that are common in county jails and prisons.

His thoughts don't sell as well on the political stump. But the truth is that all the get-tough approaches haven't solved what is a very real and very dangerous crime problem in America's cities and towns and rural communities, all of which are at more risk now thanks to the opioid epidemic.

Solutions are not as simple as some politicians would like to convince people they are. If they were, crime would be way down. It's not. It's up. And it's going to get worse until America's leaders from the courthouse to the White House start looking at causes and not just punishments.

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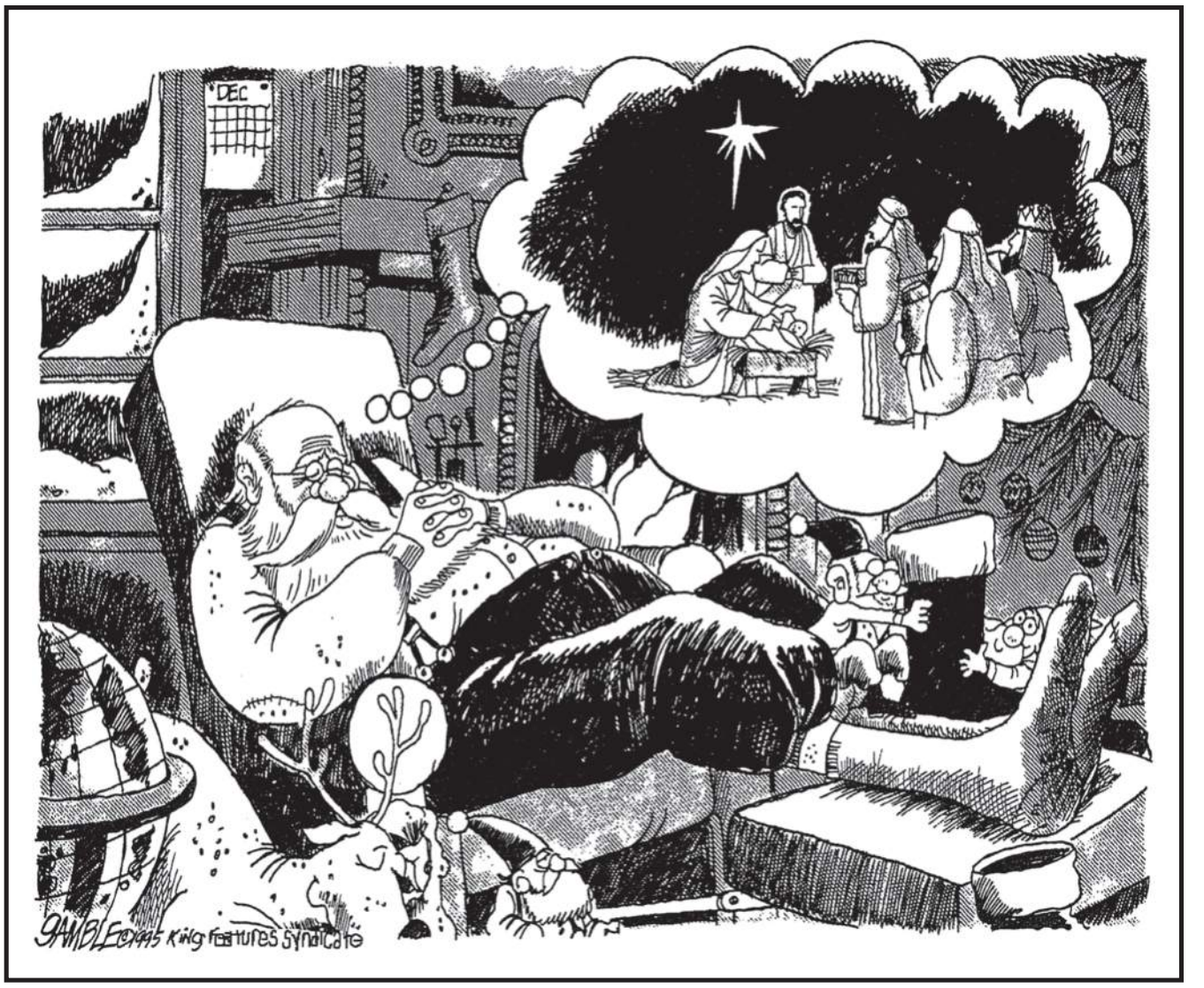


Some good things actually happened this year

By ALBERT R. HUNT
Bloomberg View

Albert R. Hunt is a Bloomberg View *columnist. He was the executive editor of Bloomberg News, before which he was a reporter, bureau chief and executive Washington editor at the* Wall Street Journal. *Readers may email him at ahunt1@bloomberg.net.*

I'm a critic of President Donald Trump, so most of the 150 columns I've written this year have been negative. Now, in the holiday spirit, it's time to celebrate the good stuff that happened in 2017.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the Jackie Robinson Museum took place in April, 70 years after the Brooklyn Dodger great broke Major League Baseball's color barrier and ended almost 80 years of segregation. Located in lower Manhattan, this tribute to the civil rights pioneer is scheduled to open in the spring of 2019. Professional baseball has done a good job celebrating Robinson, retiring his number 42 and honoring him every April 15, the date of his debut.

In the U.S. Capitol, where Democrats and Republicans barely speak to each other, two Texas congressmen reminded us that bipartisan civility was once the norm. After a cancelled flight, Rep. Will Hurd, a Republican, and Rep. Beto O'Rourke, a Democrat, drove together on the 1,600 mile trip back to Washington. It brought to mind Gerald Ford's wisecrack that congressional comity started to erode with the arrival of the jet airplane, which let members head home more often and left them less time to spend with each other.

Natural disasters produced heroes from Texas to Florida to Puerto Rico. On July 8, for example, Jessica and Derek Simmons were walking on the beach in Panama City, Fla., when they noticed nine people, including a couple of children, caught in a rip tide and in danger of drowning. They swiftly gathered 80 others on the beach, forming a human chain that reached to the trapped swimmers and made it possible to pull them to safety.

Famed chef Jose Andres swung into action after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico on Sept. 20 and Washington dawdled. He set up a food-delivery service that provided millions of hot meals and sandwiches to a traumatized citizenry, more than the Red Cross or the government.

In East Texas, Southwest Airlines flew scores of lost puppies and cats to new homes after Hurricane Harvey inundated Houston in August.

Pro football star J.J. Watt worked around the clock to raise more than $30 million in relief funds. Then the city got a shot in the arm two months later when the Houston Astros won their first World Series.

Medical science made strides in developing gene-altering techniques and immunotherapies to treat cancer, even in severely ill adults with leukemia. It's a reminder of extraordinary progress. My dad was a pediatrician, and I can still picture how devastated he was when a young patient was diagnosed with leukemia. It was a death warrant. Today the survival rate for children with acute lymphocytic leukemia is above 85 percent.

Smoking continues to decline, plummeting more than 20 percent since the turn of the century, according to USA Facts, the reference website launched by former Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer. The site is a trove of good news, including this data point: The number of hate crimes dropped at about the same pace as smoking. That was before Trump became president, so we'll see what happens next.

A veteran Virginia state legislator who proclaimed himself the state's "chief homophobe" lost his bid for re-election in November—to a transgender woman. He'd sponsored a bathroom bill restricting access by transgender people to public restrooms.

"The Post," a movie celebrating press freedom, hit theaters last week. It's a stirring and largely factual account of how the Washington Post, despite threats from the government and investors, decided in 1971 to publish parts of the Pentagon Papers, the secret government chronicle of U.S. deceptions during the Vietnam War. It was The New York Times that broke this seminal story and then was blocked by the government from further publication. The Post got the papers and published despite legal risks. The Supreme Court later ruled that the government's effort to prevent publication was unconstitutional. It's a story with contemporary importance amid Trump's attacks on news organizations and his babble about fake news. Meryl Streep and Tom Hanks are fabulous.

With the arrival of Kai Woodruff Hunt a month ago, my wife and I became grandparents.

Trump's term will end in only 1,123 days.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

'Happy holidays' captures the true spirit of Christmas

By ISSAC J. BAILEY
The Charlotte Observer

Issac J. Bailey is interim associate editor for the Observer *editorial board.*

I'm a Christian who grew up not realizing there were holidays at the end of the year besides Christmas and New Year's. I never had to. I was in the majority and uttering the words "Merry Christmas" was akin to breathing air; it was just something everyone did.

That's why the supposed war on Christmas has long baffled me. I grew up being warned not to allow Christmas to become too secular, too focused on gift-giving and not enough on Jesus, only later to see fellow Christians outraged that employees at the mall and on commercials had begun saying "Happy Holidays" instead.

The irony is that in 1999, a federal court said that Christmas did not violate the establishment of religion clause of the U.S. Constitution because it had become so secular and was even being celebrated by non-Christians. That's right. One of Christianity's most sacred holidays can remain public because it has been deemed insufficiently religious, and many Christians are passionately using the same rationale to protect the faith from a contrived war that only they seem to be fighting.

I only learned about other religions – or that you could be an atheist and a good person at the same time – when I was introduced to them after many years of believing there was only one true faith. And still, none of those faiths is treated with the deference Christianity is afforded in the United States, even with the secular embrace of "happy holidays," which is simply a wise move by retailers and advertisers to engage as many potential customers as possible, and the ability of others to voice opinions and encourage laws and social norms that don't squarely align with the conservative Christianity I long embraced.

That's why it has been odd to hear white evangelical Christians, in particular, giddily respond to President Donald Trump's claim that we can now say "Merry Christmas" again, as though President Barack Obama had outlawed the phrase. He hadn't; it's easy to find video of Obama repeatedly using the phrase himself in multiple settings while in office. It's been odder still that the same Christians embraced Trump, a man whose life choices have not illustrated he has adhered to many – if any – Christian tenets while shunning Obama, a man whose personal life does.

As Christians, we are so accustomed to being the sole center of attention, it can feel like an attack when others are invited on stage to soak up a bit of the spotlight, too.

Christmas remains the center of the universe this time of year, and that likely won't change. There is Hanukkah, which receives public respect but not nearly the public attention of Christmas. There's Kwanzaa, celebrated in many African-American households. There's the Prophet's birthday for Muslims and The Wright Brothers Day and the December solstice and the Feast of Our Lady Guadalupe and others most of us probably wouldn't recognize.

My understanding of Christmas is that God decided to come to Earth in human form – leaving behind the trappings and high status available to an all-powerful being – to reach the left-behind, downtrodden and hard-hearted and others, to humble himself to begin a journey that would end in the ultimate sacrifice. Somehow, that lesson has gotten lost by too many Christians in a rush to preserve a status that isn't even in jeopardy.

That's why "happy holidays," which is an embrace of all people, is a truer adherence to the Christmas spirit than "Merry Christmas" has become. Don't be fooled otherwise.

LITERARY NOOK

Solstice: A snowflake, a Snowcone, a senior sonnet

By JOEY 'PEPE BATBON' CONNOLLY
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Winter solstice, when the Earth is tilted on its axis the furthest away from the sun, was Dec. 21, 2017. It mark*ed the beginning of winter in the northern hemisphere. That brings cold and freezing weather to northern latitudes. We have none of that at 15 degrees north latitude in Micronesia We do, however, have snow in the CNMI. Sometimes it is actually flown in from Japan. Sometimes we eat it in Snowcones!*

A Winter Solstice Wail

Tubas bemoan winter's cold cash loan
they drone and bleat as fingers shrink
and stuck valves clink from loss of heat
from the gray sky no sound
on the playground a blue jay feather falls
when robins return pulling up worms
I yearn once again for snowballs
the sun barely up icy water in a cup
at a solstice wake - on my runny nose
with most of me froze rests a snowflake.

Snowcone!

I would build that cone in air
that slushy cone those mounds of ice
and all who slurped would taste it there
and all would shout, Snowcone! Shave ice!
its melting juicy colors rare
piled in shaved mounds so nice
so close your eyes and taste with joy
summer delights for girl and boy
dessert in Polar Paradise.

Sonnet 81

(after Sonnet 18 by W. Shakespeare, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day")

Shall I compare thee to a winter worn thin
your hair grows snowy as you grow old
coughing winds put frost on the pumpkin
and winter's lions freeze out in the cold
sometimes too fast Jack Frost's blanket spreads
and often are the houses and windows covered
field after field of wildflowers found dead
by freezing or fresh white snow has smothered
but thy winter of discontent will pass
as February's groundhog valentine melts
as March winds uncover tufts of grass
when mother fries up a pan of fresh smelts
so short as winter solstice or crossing of the letter 't'
short winter days will come that's just fine with me.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Truth or dare?

"Truth has a canny way of catching people with their lies." Let us see where the claimed of "I did not support removing construction workers from the eligible job categories for the CW permit in H.R. 339." Gov. Ralph Torres made this denial publicly when interviewed by a local reporter upon return from his trip to the nation's capital two week ago.

So, what was the cause of the denial and how did we get to the stage of finger-pointing?

Let us do a little bit of back tracking. When the CNMI's control of immigration was taken away by the U.S. Congress due to leadership failure in resolving alleged labor abuses, human trafficking and inadequate immigration enforcement efforts, the dreadful consequence was the enacted via the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008, U.S. Public Law 110-229. This law made fundamental changes in the way foreign workers are treated and allowed to work in the CNMI.

This statute has some fundamental provisions directly affecting the CNMI:

1) It provided the CNMI a non-voting delegate to Congress;

2) It established the CNMI-Only Transitional Worker (CW-1) visa classification, which allows employers in the CNMI to apply for permission to employ foreign nonimmigrant workers who are otherwise ineligible to work under other nonimmigrant visa categories;

3) It imposed application processing fees of $150

dedicated toward producing and training of the local workforce; and

4) It set a sunset provision of five years for the exit of all CWs from the CNMI.

The sunset provision of five years and its imposed mandate of training and producing the local workforce to replace foreign workers by the deadline has put our leaders on edge. To them, the fastest and easiest way to deal with this matter is to appeal for U.S. intervention, like they have done so before.

Rather than enact enabling legislation with adequate funding to commission the establishment of an accelerated local workforce development and training program, our current leaders opted to use their persuasive skills to deal with the issue. These leaders apparently believed that, with their mastery in persuading federal officials to extend the original five-year cutoff date of Dec. 31, 2015, to Dec. 31, 2019, they felt empowered by their success and thought that they could still use the same approach to mitigate the latest use of the CW for construction workers fiasco by certain Chinese employers.

Realizing that time is now running out on them, and especially as the CNMI-Only Transitional Worker Program draws down, and USCIS released the cap for the final three fiscal years on Nov. 21, 2017, desperation becomes the feelings of heightened energy to do something immediate.

Even Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan got involved because of the pressure from the business community. As a result, he introduced H.R. 339, in consultation with local business and government leaders on Jan. 3, 2017. This bill was referred to the House committees on Natural Resources and Judiciary. The House passed it on Jan. 30, 2017. After the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, of which the bill was referred to, received written testimonies from the CNMI and made its final recommendations, H.R. 339 secured the Senate approval and the President of the United States eventually signed it into law on Aug. 22, 2017. H.R. 339 became U.S. P.L. 115-53, the Northern Mariana Islands Economic Expansion Act.

The cause of dispute and finger pointing, together with the forceful claim by Gov. Torres and members of the Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp. that Kilili had deceived/lied to them, was the proposed amendments contained in H.R. 339 for change to specific language in 48 U.S. Code Section 1806, Immigration and Transition.

This is a verbatim illustration of the text of the amendments in H.R. 339 Section 2. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Transitional Workers.

Section 6 of 48 U.S. Code 1806 is amended

(1) in subsection (a) (6), by striking "$150" and inserting "$200", and

(2) in subsection (d) (2)

(A) by striking the period at the end of the first sentence and inserting "except a permit for construction occupations (as that term is defined by the Department of Labor as Standard Occupational Classification Groups 47-0000 or any successor or provisions) shall only be issued to extend a permit first issued before October 1, 2015; and

(B) by striking the period at the end of the third sentence and inserting ", except that for the fiscal year 2017 the number of permits issued shall not exceed 15,000."

The other amendments that was inserted in H.R. 339 took away the administrative discretions of the secretaries of the departments of Labor, Homeland Security, and Justice and the consultation process with local authorities. Such discretionary authority was granted by Congress in the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 or U.S. P.L. 110-229.

Now that the public has read the written testimony of Gov. Torres before U.S. legislative committees and the amendments made by Delegate Sablan in H.R. 339, you, the citizens of the Commonwealth, be the judge as to, who wasn't truthful and who deceived us all.

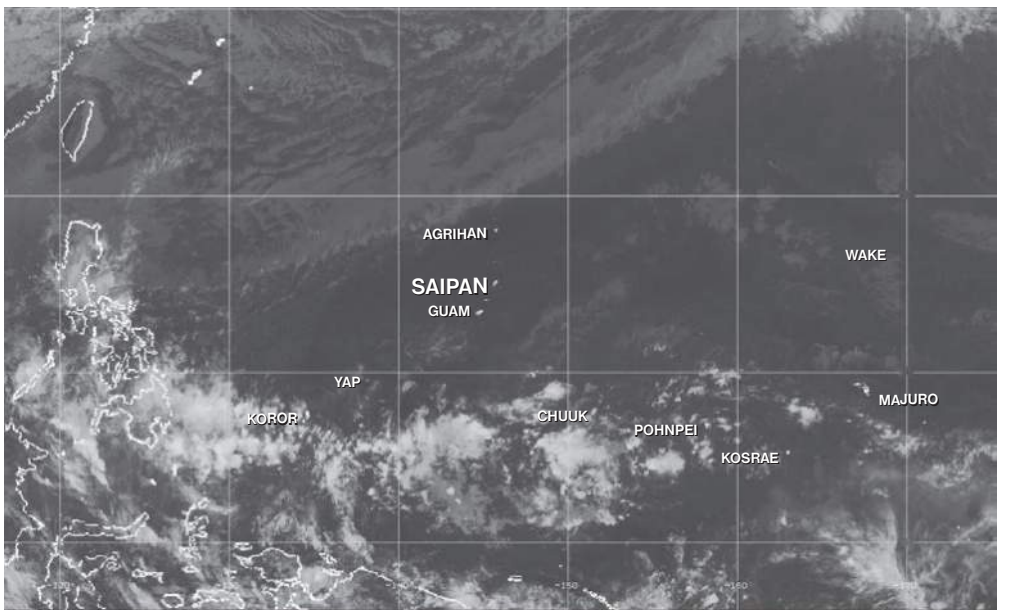
Daniel O. Quitugua
Kannat Tabla, Saipan

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly sunny with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼78°	▲88° ▼78°	▲88° ▼77°	▲87° ▼77°	▲87° ▼77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:30 AM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2017
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Little change has been made in the forecast, which remains mainly partly cloudy with isolated showers. It still looks mostly cloudy for Friday through the weekend as a developing disturbance slides by south of Guam, but showers should still be mainly isolated. East swell is up to 5-7 feet this morning, good for surf up to 9 feet along east facing shores, resulting in a high rip risk for today. By evening, the swell is expected to be 4 to 6 feet, with 6-8 ft surf and a moderate rip risk. Winds and seas will decrease somewhat for the holiday weekend.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°
Palau	Thunderstorms	83° / 76°
Yap	Thunderstorms	83° / 77°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	84° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Windy	73° / 61°
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	39° / 21°
Hong Kong	Sunny	73° / 63°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	80° / 70°
London	Sunny	41° / 30°
Los Angeles	Sunny	77° / 53°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	84° / 75°
Melbourne	Showers	79° / 61°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	79° / 67°
New York	Sunny	23° / 15°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	52° / 43°
Paris	Mostly Sunny	43° / 34°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	54° / 36°
Rome	Rain	48° / 36°
Salem	Cloudy	44° / 34°
San Francisco	Showers	56° / 45°
Seoul	Mostly Cloudy	34° / 27°
Tokyo	Sunny	50° / 37°
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	29° / 20°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
3:04 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.36
8:36 AM	LOW TIDE	0.69
3:06 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.97
10:14 PM	LOW TIDE	0.25

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Friday	6:41 AM	5:56 PM
Saturday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Sunday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Monday	6:43 AM	5:57 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	1:21 am	1:36 pm
Friday	-	2:17 am	2:22 pm
Saturday	-	3:15 am	3:13 pm
Sunday	-	4:17 am	4:08 pm
Monday	-	5:21 am	5:09 pm

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 19, 2017

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA6394	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA6392	8:40am	9:30am	Daily
UA6391	1:30pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA6390	2:20pm	3:10pm	2, 3, 6
UA6398	6:05pm	6:55pm	Daily
UA6396	9:50pm	10:40pm	Daily

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA6391	1:30pm	2:05pm	1, 4, 5, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA6391	2:35pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL297	4:20pm	7:15pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3451	3:10am	6:10am	1, 7
7C3451	4:00am	7:05am	4, 5

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

TW308	2:00am	6:05am	Daily
OZ626	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:40am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
LJ652	3:40am	7:30am	1, 4, 5, 7
7C3403	4:45am	8:30am	Daily
7C3401	4:00pm	7:45pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	5:40am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-HANGZHOU (HGH)

JD396	7:30am	12:00pm	1
JD396	4:50pm	10:00pm	4

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	6:35am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/701	2:10am	10:55am	1 via ICN
OZ626/701	2:50am	10:55am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA6394/191	4:15am	9:00am	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
UA6394/PR111	4:15am	8:10am	7 via GUM
UA6394/PR111	4:15am	9:20am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via GUM
UA6398/183	6:05pm	9:40pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA6398/183	6:05pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA6398/193	6:05pm	11:50pm	2, 5 via GUM-ROR

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX077	1:50am	5:15am	1, 4
OZ626/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UO43	5:45am	8:40am	1, 3, 5, 7
UA6398/159	6:05pm	11:00pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA6393	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA6395	7:15am	8:05am	Daily
UA6391	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA6390	12:10pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6 via Rota
UA6397	4:45pm	5:35pm	Daily
UA6399	8:30pm	9:20pm	Daily

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA6390	12:10pm	12:45pm	2, 3, 6

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA6390	1:15pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:30am	3:05pm	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3452	9:00pm	2:10am+1	4
7C3452	9:05pm	2:10am+1	3, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3402	9:30am	3:00pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
TW307	7:45pm	1:00am+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
LJ651	9:10pm	2:40am+1	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3404	10:10pm	3:40am+1	Daily

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:20pm	4:30am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

HANGZHOU (HGH)-SAIPAN

JD395	8:25am	3:30pm	4
JD395	9:55pm	5:00am+1	7

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:25pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA182/6395	12:40am	8:05am	3, 6 via GUM
UA190/6397	9:55am	5:35pm	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
OZ702/625	12:25pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/625	12:25pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR110/UA6395	10:05pm	8:05am+1	Daily via GUM
UA192/6395	10:30pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via ROR-GUM
UA184/6395	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
HX076	5:15pm	12:15am+1	3, 7
UO42	6:50pm	1:45am+1	7
UO42	9:30pm	4:25am+1	2, 4, 6
UA116/6395	11:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U Sichuan Airlines, 7C Jeju Air, DL Delta Airlines, JD Beijing Capital, UO HK Express, HX HongKong Airlines, LJ Jin Air, MU China Eastern, OZ Asiana Airlines, TW t'way Air, UA United Airlines, PR PAL Express; ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The* Saipan Tribune *is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	7:30AM	8:00AM	Daily
1302	11:30AM	12:00PM	Daily
1303	4:00PM	4:30PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	8:15AM	8:45AM	Daily
3102	1:45PM	2:15PM	Daily
3103	4:45PM	5:15PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15PM	12:45PM	Daily

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	1:00PM	1:30PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
1202	8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
1203	9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
1204	10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
1205	11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
1206	12:00PM	12:15PM	Daily
1207	1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
1208	2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
1209	3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
1210	4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
1211	5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
1212	6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2102	7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
2103	8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
2104	9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
2105	10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
2106	11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
2107	12:30PM	12:45PM	Daily
2108	1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2109	2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
2110	3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
2111	4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
2112	5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
2113	6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

USCIS breaches H-2B cap nationwide

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has reached the congressionally mandated H-2B cap for the first half of fiscal year 2018.

Dec. 15, 2017, was the final receipt date for new H-2B worker petitions requesting an employment start date before April 1, 2018. USCIS will reject new cap-subject H-2B petitions received after Dec. 15 that request an employment start date before April 1, 2018.

USCIS continues to accept H-2B petitions that are exempt from the congressionally mandated cap. This includes the following types of petitions:

■ Current H-2B workers in the United States petitioning to extend their stay and, if applicable, change the terms of their employment or change their employers;

■ Fish roe processors, fish roe technicians, and/or supervisors of fish roe processing; and,

■ Workers performing labor or services in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands and/or Guam from Nov. 28, 2009, until Dec. 31, 2019.

USCIS is currently accepting cap-subject petitions for the second half of FY 2018 for employment start dates on or after April 1, 2018.

U.S. businesses use the H-2B program to employ foreign workers for temporary nonagricultural jobs. Currently, Congress has set the H-2B cap at 66,000 per fiscal year, with 33,000 for workers who begin employment in the first half of the fiscal year (Oct.1 - March 31) and 33,000 for workers who begin employment in the second half of the fiscal year (April 1 - Sept. 30).

We encourage H-2B petitioners to visit the H-2B Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Cap Season Web page. ***(USCIS)***

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

CNMI Homeless Coalition meeting set

The CNMI Homeless Coalition will be having its general membership meeting on Jan. 4, 2018, 10am at the Division of Youth Services conference room in Chalan Piao (adjacent to Bank of Guam). The coalition would like to invite partners, organizations, agencies and individuals providing direct or indirect services to individuals and/or families who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. If you may have any questions or concerns, contact Jacob Muna at 234-7689, 483-9447, or email jjmuna@nmhc.gov.mp. ***(PR)***

Military training at Warning Area 517

ASAN, Guam—The U.S. military will conduct training at Warning Area 517 on Dec. 27-29, from 8am to 5pm. It is recommended the general public, fishermen and marine tour operators monitor the Coast Guard broadcast notice to mariners for advisories. W-517 is activated south of latitude 12° 40' 00"N. Santa Rosa Reef and Galvez Banks are open for public use. W-517 begins south of Guam and extends south-southwest in international waters. ***(PR)***

Business hours for the CNMI Judiciary

■ Dec. 29 for Saipan, Rota, Tinian: Open from 7:30am to 11:30am. Closed from 11:31am to 4:30pm.

■ Jan. 1, 2018, New Year's Day: Saipan, Rota, Tinian will be closed.

■ Jan. 2, 2018: Saipan, Rota, Tinian hours will be limited. Essential services in the Offices of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Office of Adult Probation, Family Court Division, Drug Court Division, Marshal Services Division, Superior Court Judicial Chambers, and the Administrative Services Unit (cashier) will be provided.

The Supreme Court, Law Revision Commission, Commonwealth Recorder's Office, and Judiciary Administrative Office will be closed.

For more information or assistance, contact Deanna M. Ogo at the CNMI Supreme Court at (670) 236-9715 or email: deanna.manglona@justice.gov.mp or call Patrick V. Diaz at the CNMI Superior Court at 236-9765 or email: patrick.diaz@justice.gov.mp.***(PR)***

Distribution of 2017 W2-CM and annual reconciliation forms

The Division of Revenue and Taxation, Department of Finance began distributing the 2017 W2-CM and Annual Reconciliation forms and instructions last Friday, Dec. 22, 2017.

Businesses, employers, and all payroll service providers are encouraged to reserve forms needed by calling the Administration Office of the Division of Revenue and Taxation at 664-1000, 664-1098 or via fax at 664-1015.

Forms will be available for pick-up from the Compliance Branch or main office located in the Joeten Dandan Building.

Employers are also reminded that forms are required to be filed at Revenue and Taxation by Feb. 28, 2018. ***(PR)***

JKPL offers ukulele classes

Registration for Joeten-Kiyu Public Library's Beginner and Advance Ukulele Class is now open. The minimum age requirement is ages 8 years or older and adults. The total cost for eight class sessions is $50.

Ukulele classes are held at Joeten-Kiyu Public Library in partnership with ukulele instructor Larry Lee and son, Kui Lee. The deadline to register is Saturday, Jan. 6, 2018.

The JKPL ukulele class is based on "First come; first paid." Students must provide their own ukuleles and a folder to hold music sheets (plastic sheet protectors and a three-ring binder are recommended). Parents/guardians must sign a liability waiver form on behalf of their participating children and must adhere to public library policies and procedures. For questions regarding beginner and advanced ukulele class, call Celina Foreman or Victoria Cabrera at 235-7315/7322 during regular library hours. ***(PR)***

Free health screening in San Antonio

Members and volunteers of the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance Marianas chapter, National Youth Movement for the West Philippine Sea Marianas chapter, BAYANi-Bayan Bago Sarili, and volunteers pose for a group photo after the health screening on Dec. 17, 2017, at the San Antonio Parish Social Hall.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

More than a hundred community members of different ethnic groups availed of the free health screening last Dec. 17, 2017, at the San Antonio Parish Social Hall in San Antonio.

Organized by the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance Marianas chapter (CNMI and Guam), National Youth Movement for the West Philippine Sea Marianas chapter, the BAYANi group (Bayan Bago Sarili), National Federation of Filipino American Associations Marianas chapter (CNMI and Guam) and the Asian community of the CNMI, the health screening was sponsored by USP4GG chair Dr. Celia Lamkin and Ronald Lamkin, a volunteer of the USPGG Marianas chapter.

"Our good health is one of the most precious things that a person can possess. Our medical mission was designed to help people on their journey to a healthy life," said Ronald Lamkin.

Dr. Lamkin said the health screening included free blood pressure and pulse/heart rate measurements, blood sugar tests, weight and height determinations, and body mass index calculations.

Free health-related brochures on prevention of hypertension, stroke, heart attack, asthma, obesity, high cholesterol/triglycerides, among others, were distributed.

Graduating nursing students of the Northern Marianas College, nurses, teachers, members of the USPGG Marianas chapter, BAYANi, and NYMWPS members volunteered at the event.

Free refreshments were also served.

"The community members were very grateful and happy that they were provided with these free health screening services and they became more aware of their health status. They were advised on changes of lifestyle to maintain good health and wellness. They also learned a lot about the prevention of some diseases. Those with alarming results were advised to immediately consult their primary physician," added Dr. Lamkin.

Others that assisted with the health screening included the San Antonio Parish Church, Rev. Romil Aperocho, Johnny Gacayan, Lucita Reyes, Edgar Gacayan, Ben Magia, Fanny dela Rosa, Belle dela Rosa, Jovy Brondo, Donna Aquino, Beth, Fely Legaspi, NMC nursing students, USPGG Marianas chapter members, NYMWPS Marianas chapter members, BAYANi members, NAFFAA CNMI chapter members, and Asian Community of the CNMI members. ***(PR)***

EPA awards $8.6M to NMI

HONOLULU—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded over $2.3 million to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality to strengthen its capacity to protect human health and the environment, and has awarded over $6.3 million to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure support.

"This funding will help provide cleaner water, safe drinking water and sanitation to the local communities in the Commonwealth," said EPA administrator Scott Pruitt.

"Both the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality and the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. are great partners in environmental protection," said Alexis Strauss, EPA's acting regional administrator for the Pacific Southwest. "We are pleased to support programs committed to achieving a better environment for all the residents of CNMI."

BECQ uses EPA funding to support inspections, emergency responses, radon assessments, protection of coral reefs, cleanups of contaminated lands and polluted streams, monitoring safety of pesticide use, ensuring clean beaches and safe drinking water, and improvements to hazardous waste and clean air programs.

The funding has also helped BECQ assess and permanently close the last inventoried leaking underground storage tank on Saipan. EPA's recent funding of over $1.3 million supplements the $1 million in funds awarded to BECQ earlier this year.

"The CNMI, together with EPA, share a profound commitment to the protection of our natural environment, as we develop plans to protect air, water, and land, and move forward with sustainable development," said Ray Masga, acting BECQ administrator.

EPA's award of $6.3 million in Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water state revolving funds to CUC will support projects to increase 24-hour drinking water service to customers, improve drinking water quality, and prevent water pollution. Targeted projects include water supply line replacement, drinking water well rehabilitation, and water system improvement projects. The funds will also support islandwide sewer pump station improvements, wastewater treatment plant improvements, other sewer system line replacements.

"CUC will always be indebted to EPA for its long-term financial support to the CNMI," said Gary Camacho, CUC's executive director. "The investments have greatly improved the quality of life on each island of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. CUC is changing for the better and the critical funding provided by EPA is extremely important to the corporation's long-term success."

The EPA's Pacific Southwest Region (Region 9) administers and enforces federal environmental laws in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, the Pacific Islands and 148 tribal nations—home to more than 50 million people. ***(EPA)***

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Busines

US industries can start counting their benefits from tax law

WASHINGTON (AP)—Craft breweries are raising a glass to the Republicans' new tax overhaul: It cuts the excise tax on beer. Retailers, long saddled with heavy tax bills, will get relief. So will some high-profile names in corporate finance, led by Wells Fargo.

The tax measure that President Donald Trump signed into law Friday distributes benefits across a range of American industries, from construction to health care.

"As a general rule of thumb, everybody's doing well under this bill," Martin Sullivan, chief economist at Tax Analysts, says of U.S. companies. "When you give out a trillion in tax breaks, it's hard to create a lot of losers."

No wonder the stock market has been roaring in anticipation of fatter after-tax corporate profits. The new law slashes the corporate tax rate to 21 percent from 35 percent. It applies a low one-time tax to the profits that corporations have long kept overseas to avoid paying taxes under the current higher rate.

It also delivers a windfall to people who pay personal taxes on business earnings. It lets companies immediately write off the full cost of new equipment. And it showers goodies on some individual industries, such as craft brewers, distilleries and wineries.

In dollars, the biggest tax savings from 2018 through 2027 go to manufacturers: $261.5 billion, according to an analysis by the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Wharton Budget Model. Next-most-fortunate are insurance and finance companies ($249.4 billion) and retailers ($171.4 billion).

The reasoning behind shrinking the tax burdens of corporations is to free up money for companies to invest in buildings, equipment and people and thereby juice the economy — and, in turn, benefit workers. Yet mainstream economists have expressed mainly doubts that workers will benefit much from corporations' lower tax burdens.

Supporters of the Republican tax bill point out that America's 35 percent corporate tax is one of the highest among advanced economies. But the tax code is so riddled with loopholes that few corporations have actually paid that list price. Without the new law, the effective tax rate across all industries would have been 21.2 percent next year. With it, the effective rate across industries drops all the way to 9.2 percent in 2018, according to the Penn Wharton Model.

Not all industries have gained equally from loopholes. Retailers, for example, would have paid a 27.5 percent rate in 2018; under the new law, they'll pay just 15.6 percent.

"The tax bill is a big shot in the arm for retailers, who have traditionally paid taxes at nearly the full amount," says Matthew Shay, CEO of the National Retail Federation.

Shay says he thinks the bill will help retailers accelerate investment in e-commerce and mobile technology. He also predicts that the bill will induce foreign-owned retailers to shift investment dollars into the United States.

Finance and insurance companies would have paid an effective corporate tax rate of 26.1 percent next year. Now, it will be 14.3 percent. Analysts at Goldman Sachs have estimated that the tax law will boost big-bank earnings per share by 13 percent next year. The top beneficiary will be Wells Fargo, which has been dogged by scandals over cheating customers. It will enjoy an 18 percent earnings surge in 2018, Goldman estimates.

Technology companies like Apple and Google's parent Alphabet Inc. can now catch a break on profits they've stored abroad. Under current law, corporations must pay the U.S. corporate tax on overseas earnings, but not until they return the money.

So tech companies have kept a big chunk of profits overseas — $669 billion worth at the end of last year, according to Moody's Investors Service.

The tax overhaul imposes a discounted one-time levy on those earnings — 15.5 percent for earnings held in cash or other liquid assets and 8 percent for earnings held in harder-to-sell assets. That means tech companies can return the money the United States with less of a tax burden. But their employees may not have cause to rejoice: CFRA analyst Scott Kessler predicts that tech companies will use most of the money they repatriate to buy back their stock and pay shareholder dividends.

The tax bill let craft brewers cross something off their longstanding wish list: The federal excise tax they pay will be halved to $3.50 a barrel on the first 60,000 barrels. Wineries and distillers also get tax breaks.

At COOP Ale Works in Oklahoma City, founder Daniel Mercer forecasts a tax windfall of about $60,000 next year. The 8-year-old brewery, which has quadrupled its staff to 31 in the past 2½ years and whose annual revenue has reached $5 million, was already planning to invest $2 million in equipment. The tax savings will contribute to that project and also "helps with building tap rooms, and tap rooms are a really high-margin source of revenue," Mercer says.

The tax plan also benefits owners of "pass-through" businesses, who pay personal income tax on business earnings: It lets them deduct 20 percent of the first $315,000 in earnings. The pass-through provision will help Esther Novis, who owns the Young Scientists Club, a company in Jamestown, Rhode Island, that sells science kits and other toys that encourage children to dabble in science.

Child abuse on planes can create 'gray areas' for airlines

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Flight crews can restrain passengers or even divert flights when violent behavior erupts midair, but when the situation involves a parent potentially abusing a child, the decisions are not so clear cut.

A 5½-hour JetBlue flight earlier this month continued to its final destination after three passengers reported a mother mistreating her 8-year-old son, including grabbing him by the neck and shoving him against a window as he cried.

The same day, the airline diverted a flight to Las Vegas after a man reportedly hit and bit other passengers.

The airline did not respond to requests for comment on the incident involving the child, and a federal complaint against the mother does not say whether the flight attendant who received the passenger complaints intervened.

While it may vary by airline, flight attendants are trained in how to de-escalate violent situations under widely accepted procedures, and it is likely that JetBlue concluded it was safest to leave the mother and son together and not disrupt the flight, aviation experts say.

"This is certainly a very unpleasant situation, but it is one that is full of, if you will, gray areas, as opposed to a black-and-white type of situation," said Henry Harteveldt, a travel industry analyst.

"The challenge is that if you separate the parent from the child, it could elevate the anxiety between the two," he said. "If the flight attendants were to physically restrain the mother, that too could exacerbate the anxiety in the child by seeing his parent restrained and possibly in harm."

A misdemeanor complaint filed in U.S. District Court accuses Cherice Dawn Klipfel of assaulting her son during the flight from Boston to Salt Lake City on Dec. 10. Her attorney did not return a call seeking comment.

A woman sitting next to Klipfel told an FBI agent that she saw the mother strike, slap, kick and shove her son, who had a window seat.

"Each violent episode would be followed by a loving period where (Klipfel) would calm down and they would sit without a problem," according to the complaint. "(Passenger) was adamant that the violence (Klipfel) was committing against (son) was absolutely not parenting but abuse and assault. (Passenger) described (Klipfel) striking and shoving (boy) while (boy) pleaded for her to stop."

The complaint says two other passengers saw Klipfel "tightly cover" her son's face and "shake him aggressively" while the boy cried.

The airline faced another midair disturbance that day, when a passenger going from Los Angeles to New York had to be restrained after hitting and biting others, according to cellphone video shared with a TV station. Officers met the plane after it was diverted to Las Vegas, but no police report was taken and no arrest was made.

Sara Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA union, said many factors play into a decision to divert a flight, including whether the violent behavior has stopped and how quickly the aircraft can secure a landing spot at an airport.

She added that flight attendants know to intervene to try to stop violent behavior by giving clear verbal commands, restraining a person or separating passengers regardless of their relationship.

"Bottom line, the actions of the mother in assaulting her son would create a very high level of threat," Nelson said. "This goes beyond the relationship between the mother and son. This is a passenger that is acting violently against another passenger in a small space where people cannot get away and situations can escalate quickly."

A grand jury on Wednesday returned a misdemeanor indictment against Klipfel of Lakewood, Colorado. She has been released from custody, and her trial on an assault charge is scheduled for February.

Janet Rosenzweig, executive director of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, praised the three passengers who complained to the flight attendant. She said it's difficult for some to intervene to help a child because Americans believe it is against social norms.

Treasury sanctions N. Koreans

WASHINGTON (AP)—The U.S. Treasury Department issued sanctions Tuesday against two officials it describes as "key leaders of North Korea's unlawful weapons programs."

The sanctions against Kim Jong Sik and Ri Pyong Chol block them from any property or interests in property within U.S. jurisdiction, and prohibit them from transactions with American citizens. Treasury said the men are senior officials in North Korea's Munitions Industry Department.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the sanctions are part of the United States' "maximum pressure campaign" to isolate North Korea and "achieve a fully denuclearized Korean Peninsula."

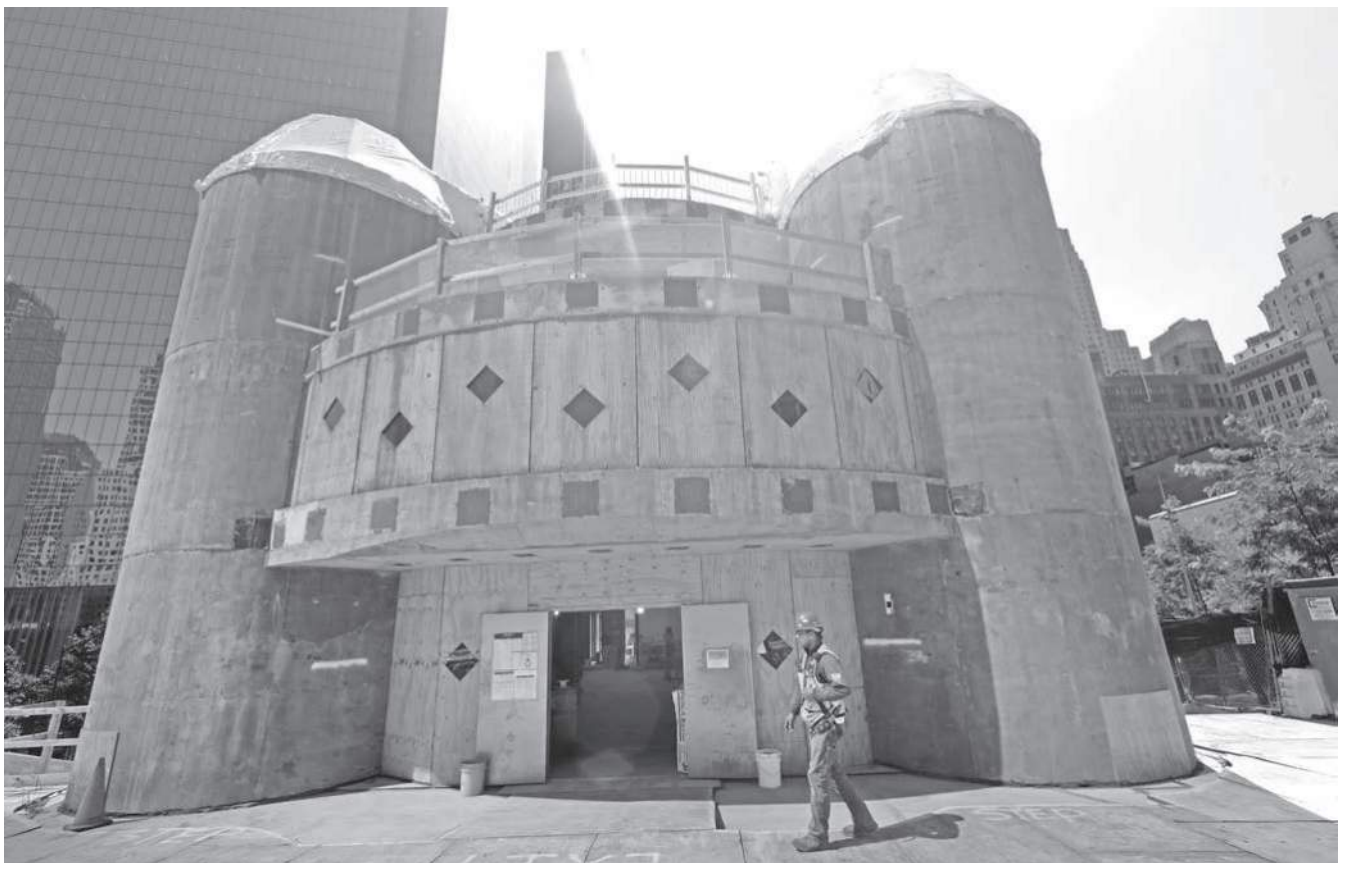
The United Nations Security Council unanimously approved tough new sanctions against North Korea on Friday in response to its latest launch of a ballistic missile, which Pyongyang says is capable of reaching the U.S. mainland.

Baik Tae-hyun, spokesman of South Korea's Unification Ministry, expressed hope Wednesday that the continuing campaign of sanctions and pressure will eventually force North Korea into "making the right decision" and engaging in dialogue over its nuclear program.

Baik noted it was the seventh time the U.S. Treasury has imposed unilateral sanctions against the North since the start of President Donald Trump's administration. Baik also pointed out that the two North Koreans had already been under U.N. Security Council sanctions.

Nation

Construction halted at church destroyed in Sept. 11 attacks



AP
In this Aug. 10, 2017 file photo, a construction worker walks in front of the St. Nicholas National Shrine in New York.

NEW YORK (AP)—Construction on a Greek Orthodox church to replace one that was crushed in the Sept. 11 attacks has been temporarily suspended amid rising costs and questions over how donations have been managed.

The St. Nicholas National Shrine next to the World Trade Center memorial plaza was to replace a tiny church obliterated when the trade center's south tower fell in 2001. The new building was designed by renowned architect Santiago Calatrava, who created the soaring white bird-like mall and transit hub nearby called the Oculus.

But unlike the transit hub, built largely with federal transportation dollars, the church is being funded through donations including from the Greek government, Greek Orthodox church members around the world, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston and the Italian city of Bari, whose patron saint is St. Nicholas.

In September, the estimated cost was $50 million. But according to The New York Times , which first reported the work suspension, the cost had jumped to an estimated $72 million to $78 million as of this month.

Two firms, PricewaterhouseCoopers and BakerHostetler, were hired to perform an independent investigation into the construction, according to a Dec. 9 statement posted on the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

The stoppage was ordered by the construction company on the project, Skanska USA, the statement said.

"The archdiocese is confidently hopeful that construction will recommence in the very near future and has been assured by Skanska ... that they are looking forward to the rescinding of this temporary suspension to continue working together in cooperation with the archdiocese for the completion of the building project," the statement read.

The Greek Orthodox archdiocese, based in New York, represents more than 500 parishes across the country with more than 1.5 million members of the church and 800 priests. It reported last fall it was suffering from a "severe and complex" financial deficit.

Skanska, part of Stockholm-based Skanska AB, said it had extended payment deadlines and discussed alternatives with the archdiocese to try to keep the project going but ultimately had to halt construction.

"We regret that stopping work was the only viable option at this point in time," Skanska USA Executive Vice President Tom Webb said in a statement Tuesday. "We are confident that they will find the funding to complete this work at some point in the future."

The St. Nicholas shrine, meant as a salve for the faithful and a welcoming space for those wishing to reflect, was inspired by two Byzantine shrines in Istanbul, the Hagia Sophia and the Church of the Holy Savior in Chora. The building was to be sheathed in marble from quarries north of Athens, the vein of marble used to build the Parthenon.

The original St. Nicholas was far more modest. The building housed a tavern when Greek immigrants bought it in 1919 to use as a church. It was the only building not part of the trade center complex that was demolished after hijackers flew commercial jets into the towers.

Cities sue DoD over gun-check system failures

NEW YORK (AP)—Three large U.S. cities filed a federal lawsuit Tuesday against the Department of Defense, arguing that many service members who are disqualified from gun ownership weren't reported to the national background check system.

New York City, San Francisco and Philadelphia said in court papers that the military's broken system for relaying such information helped spur the massacre of 26 people inside a Texas church last month.

"This failure on behalf of the Department of Defense has led to the loss of innocent lives by putting guns in the hands of criminals and those who wish to cause immeasurable harm," New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said in a statement. "New York City is joining Philadelphia and San Francisco to stand up to the Department of Defense and demand they comply with the law and repair their drastically flawed system."

Local law enforcement officials rely on the FBI's database to conduct background checks on gun permit applications and to monitor purchases. It must be up-to-date in order to prevent people from wrongly getting guns, the cities' attorneys wrote.

The lawsuit filed in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, seeks an injunction and judicial oversight to ensure ongoing compliance with the Defense Department's obligation to submit records.

Military officials previously acknowledged problems with their reporting.

A Pentagon spokesman on Tuesday said he couldn't comment specifically on the lawsuit.

"The department continues to work with the services as they review and refine their policies and procedures to ensure qualifying criminal history information is submitted to the FBI," said Tom Crosson, a Pentagon spokesman.

The Defense Department's failure to report "significant numbers" of disqualifying records to the FBI's national background check system allowed former U.S. Air Force member Devin P. Kelley to buy a rifle and shoot 26 people to death Nov. 5 in a Sutherland Springs, Texas, church, the lawsuit said. Kelley had been convicted of assaulting family members in a 2012 court martial and should not have been allowed to purchase a gun.

Air Force leaders already acknowledged that the service failed to alert the FBI to Kelley's criminal history and that they discovered "several dozen" other such reporting omissions. They said that while policies and procedures requiring reporting were in place, training and compliance measures were lacking.

And Army leaders have said their service also has similar gaps.

Earlier this month, the Pentagon's watchdog agency it found a "troubling" number of failures this year by the military services to alert the FBI to criminal history information. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has ordered a far-ranging review of the FBI database.

Philadelphia in particular has been plagued by gun violence and "relies on this reporting when making the crucial decision whether a license-to-carry applicant should be permitted to carry a firearm," said Mayor Jim Kenney, who is a Democrat like the mayors of New York and San Francisco. "We're joining in this suit because reporting these records is absolutely critical to those decisions. The background check system only works if it contains the proper records."

San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera said in a statement that the Department of Defense's failure to accurately report criminal convictions puts Americans at risk.

ACROSS THE NATION

Bitter cold expected until New Year in US Midwest, Northeast

CHICAGO (AP)—A white Christmas for much of the Northeast and Midwest has given way to bitter cold until the New Year. Residents should expect colder-than-normal temperatures for the rest of the week, according to Chicago-area National Weather Service meteorologist Amy Seeley. Temperatures hovered around zero degrees in Chicago on Tuesday. A Christmas storm also dumped a record amount of snow on the Erie, Pennsylvania, area. The National Weather Service said 34 inches of snow fell on Monday, an all-time daily snowfall record for Erie. Another 19 inches fell before dawn Tuesday, bringing the total to 53 inches. The city issued a snow emergency, citing "dangerous and impassable" roads. Forecasters warn of sub-zero frigid arctic air and dangerously cold wind chills in much of the US. Wind chill advisories or warnings are in effect for all of North Dakota and Wisconsin, as well as swaths of South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan and Indiana.

Postal worker to be arraigned in slayings of 2 colleagues

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—A disgruntled postal worker accused of fatally shooting his supervisor at an Ohio post office and then killing a postmaster outside her apartment is scheduled to be arraigned on charges including aggravated murder. Municipal court records listed no attorney for 24-year-old DeShaune Stewart, of Columbus, ahead of his Wednesday arraignment. Police say Stewart was naked during both attacks. They say he first killed 52-year-old Lance Dempsey at a post office in suburban Dublin early Saturday morning. Police were later called about an armed man chasing a woman at a nearby apartment complex. The postmaster, 53-year-old Ginger Ballard, was found dead between vehicles with blunt-force trauma to her head, and Stewart was arrested. Police say the violence appeared to be retaliation against two people involved in Stewart's pending dismissal at work.

Police: California couple used drone to deliver drugs

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP)—Authorities say a Southern California couple used a drone to deliver illegal drugs to their customers. Benjamin Baldassarre and Ashley Carroll, of Riverside, were charged Tuesday with possessing controlled substances for sale and child endangerment. It's unclear if they have attorneys who can comment on the charges. Police arrested the couple last Thursday after neighbors suspected they were selling drugs. Authorities say a drone delivered drugs to customers at a nearby parking lot. The customers would then drive by the couple's home and throw their payments on the lawn. The child endangerment charges were filed because Baldassarre's 9-year-old daughter lived in the home, where police say they found syringes and drugs believed to include methamphetamine, LSD-laced candy and powdered fentanyl. The girl was turned over to her mother.

Asia

Rohingya refugees have only memories, saved on cellphones

KUTUPALONG, Bangladesh (AP)—Abdul Hasan can spend hours watching old videos he shot on his cellphone.

"My heart aches for my village, my home," the 16-year-old Rohingya refugee from Myanmar said in a camp in neighboring Bangladesh. "That's why we have brought these memories, this video, from Myanmar."

Since late August, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh to escape attacks by Myanmar security forces. But before fleeing from advancing soldiers, few Rohingya had time to grab many of their belongings. Instead, they poured across the border into Bangladesh bringing with them little more than horror stories of marauding forces and memories of terrifying treks through the forests.

Their old lives — homes, cattle, villages, everything — are gone. All they have left is their memories.

But if they're lucky, some of those memories are stored on the cellphones many refugees managed to bring with them.

It's the closest Hasan gets to experiencing his old life and country. One video shows him having what he calls a "coconut party." A song hailing the bravery of a Rohingya rebel leader plays in the background as Hasan and his friends eat coconuts, and laugh as they throw them at each other.

AP

In this Dec. 23, 2017 photo, Mujibullah, 22, a Rohingya refugee watches a video, which he has shot in Myanmar before crossing over into Bangladesh, at Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhiya, Bangladesh.

"When I watch this video, I think of my country, Myanmar. It really breaks my heart so much," he said.

The government of Buddhist-majority Myanmar has refused to accept Rohingya as a minority group, even though some have lived in the country for generations. Rohingya were stripped of their citizenship in 1982, denying them almost all rights and rendering them stateless.

In late August, attacks by Rohingya militants triggered a brutal and indiscriminate response by Myanmar's military, sending more than 630,000 Rohingya fleeing to nearby Bangladesh.

Mohammad Fahid, 15, said he often finds himself looking through old photos and videos on his phone. He misses his friends. He misses school.

"I shared a lot of good times and laughter with my friends. I can't do that here anymore," he said. "We could go to school, now we can't. So that is why I have kept these pictures. To remember."

There is little work for the adults in the camps, and almost no schools for the children, who make up nearly 60 percent of the refugees. There is plenty of time to scroll through cellphones.

But not all the phone memories are happy.

Mujib Ullah is sitting with his sisters in their new home,

Thousands spend Christmas in shelters after PH storm

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Tens of thousands of villagers in the southern Philippines spent their Christmas morning in emergency shelters Monday as the region dealt with the aftermath of a powerful storm that left more than 150 people dead.

Tropical Storm Tembin unleashed landslides and flash floods mostly in the hard-hit provinces of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur and on the Zamboanga Peninsula. It strengthened into a typhoon before blowing out of the country Sunday into the South China Sea toward Vietnam.

The death toll stood at 164 on Monday afternoon with another 171 people missing, Marina Marasigan of the government's disaster-response agency said at a news conference. More than 97,000 people remain in 261 evacuation centers across the south, while nearly 85,000 more people are displaced and staying elsewhere.

Intense rainfall in the mountains most likely caused landslides that blocked rainwater, Marasigan said. When the naturally formed dams broke from the pressure, torrents of water smashed into the villages below.

Officials warned villagers in accident-prone areas to evacuate early as Tembin approached and the government wanted to find out what caused the widespread storm deaths, Marasigan said. She added that it was difficult to move people from homes shortly before Christmas.

"We don't want to be dragging people out of their homes days before Christmas but it's best to convince them to quietly understand the importance of why they are being evacuated," Marina said.

The deaths and devastation inflicted by Tembin were among a series of disasters that hit the predominantly Roman Catholic nation at the peak of travel and Christmas holiday preparations.

An inter-island ferry sank off northeastern Quezon province Thursday after being lashed by fierce winds and big waves, leaving at least five people dead. More than 250 passengers and crewmen were rescued.

Earlier in the week, another tropical storm left more than 50 people dead and 31 others missing, mostly due to landslides, and damaged more than 10,000 houses in the central Philippines.

Among the areas battered by Tembin was Marawi, a lakeside city in Lanao del Sur that is still recovering from a five-month siege by pro-Islamic State group extremists that left more than 1,000 people dead and displaced the entire population of about 200,000 people.

The Philippines is battered by about 20 typhoons and storms each year, making the archipelago that lies on the Pacific typhoon belt one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.

World

KREMLIN SAYS:

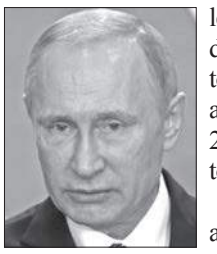
Russia election boycott campaign may be illegal

MOSCOW (AP)—The Kremlin hinted Tuesday at possible legal repercussions for Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny over his calls for a boycott of the March presidential election.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, wouldn't comment on the Election Commission's decision to bar Navalny from running but said the "calls for boycott ought to be carefully studied to see if they are breaking the law."

As expected, Russia's top election body on Monday formally barred Navalny from a presidential run. Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner and Putin's most prominent rival, promptly put out a video statement saying that the ban shows "Putin is terribly scared and is afraid of running against me." He called on supporters to stay away from the vote in protest.

Meanwhile, Putin's backers convened Tuesday afternoon to formally nominate him for presidency after he announced that he will run as an independent candidate.



Putin

Prominent lawmakers, film actors, musicians and athletes gathered at a Soviet-era exhibition hall to endorse him. Putin did not attend because of other engagements, Peskov said.

Putin, who has been in power for 18 years and is expected to easily win another six-year term, has so far refrained from campaigning. Navalny, meanwhile, has been aggressively seeking votes all year, reaching out to the most remote parts of the country.

Peskov rejected suggestions that Navalny's absence from the ballot could dent the legitimacy of Putin's possible re-election.

Russian law doesn't specifically prohibit someone from calling for an election boycott, but authorities last year blocked access to several websites that did so.

Navalny rose to prominence in 2009 with investigations into official corruption and became a protest leader when hundreds of thousands took to the streets across Russia in 2011 to protest electoral fraud.

A few years later, and after several short-term spells in jail, Navalny faced two separate sets of fraud charges, which were viewed as political retribution aimed at stopping him from running for office. In his only official campaign before his first conviction took effect, Navalny garnered 30 percent of the vote in the race for Moscow mayor in 2013.

The European Union said in a statement on Tuesday the decision to keep Navalny off the ballot "casts a serious doubt on political pluralism in Russia and the prospect of democratic elections next year."

The EU's spokeswoman for foreign affairs, Maja Kocijancic, pointed to a European Court of Human Rights ruling that Navalny was denied the right to a fair trial when he was convicted in 2013.

WORLD BRIEFS

Christmas visits a no-go after slide cuts off Austrian town

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)—People in an Austrian mountain village are spending an unusually quiet Christmas holiday period after a rockslide cut off access to the town. The dpa news agency reported Tuesday that some 150 people were stuck at home in Vals, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Innsbruck after tons of rock and rubble slid off the nearby mountain on Sunday, Christmas Eve. While they may have been unable to drive to the in-laws, it's unlikely anyone in the valley is going hungry. Mayor Klaus Ungerank said people had stocked up on groceries before Christmas anyway. Bulldozers were at work clearing an alternate roadway that was expected to be opened Wednesday.

Homemade liquor kills 12, sickens 21 in Dominican Republic

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP)—Authorities in the Dominican Republic say at least a dozen people have died and 21 more have been hospitalized after drinking homemade liquor containing methanol. Officials say the first deaths occurred last week and the remaining people recently became sick after drinking the same liquor during funerals for the initial victims. Health Secretary Altagracia Guzman said Tuesday that officials are trying to find the source of the liquor and no one has been arrested. Authorities say that the deaths occurred near the border the Dominican Republic shares with Haiti and that an unknown number of people also died in Haiti. The liquor is known as clairin and is made from sugarcane.

Egypt court convicts British woman of smuggling painkillers

CAIRO (AP)—An Egyptian court on Tuesday convicted a British woman of smuggling hundreds of powerful painkillers into the country, sentencing her to three years in prison. The woman, 33-year-old Laura Plummer from Hull, has maintained her innocence since her arrest in October on arrival from Britain at Hurghada, a Red Sea resort city. She has insisted the Tramadol tablets were for her Egyptian partner, who suffers chronic back pain. Tramadol is listed by Egyptian authorities as an illegal drug given its wide use as a heroin substitute. It's legal in Britain. Plummer's family says she had no idea that bringing the painkillers to Egypt was illegal. She did not try to hide them, they said. The conviction came as a surprise since the hearing was supposed to be taken up by the argument of the defense. Plummer's lawyers immediately lodged an appeal. Plummer, a shop worker, appeared in court on Monday, but the judged adjourned the hearings to Tuesday. Her mother, Roberta Sinclair, was in Hurghada for the trial.

Environment

Some mountain-bike groups join push to roll back protections for public lands

By EVAN HALPER
TRIBUNE WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON—When their vision of creating a scenic cycling trail through a protected alpine backcountry hit a snag, San Diego area mountain bikers turned to an unlikely ally: congressional Republicans aiming to dilute conservation laws.

The frustrations of the San Diego cycling group and some similar organizations are providing support to the Republican movement to lift restrictions on the country's most ecologically fragile and pristine landscapes, officially designated "wilderness."

The resentment of those cyclists toward the long-standing ban on "mechanized" transportation in wilderness areas presents a political opportunity for Republicans eager to foster division fissures in the broad coalition of conservation-minded groups united against the GOP environmental agenda.

"People who enjoy mountain biking have just as much right to use the public trails as those who enjoy hiking or horseback riding," said Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Calif., at a hearing on his bill to allow bikes in wilderness areas. It was approved in committee and now awaits action on the House floor. "Our wilderness areas were never intended by Congress to prohibit human-powered mountain bikes," McClintock said.

McClintock's interpretation of the Wilderness Act is hotly disputed, including by many mountain bikers, and people intimately involved with the drafting the bill. But it appeals to groups like the San Diego Mountain Biking Association, which complains that wilderness designations are interrupting plans for long-distance trails between the beaches of Ocean City and Del Mar, Calif., and the rugged mountains around the historic mining town of Julian.

The momentum of the McClintock measure is alarming conservation groups, including the organizations that maintain the Pacific Crest Trail and the Appalachian Trail, which together stretch through dozens of wilderness areas. They warn that it would invite mountain bikers to shred through the sensitive landscapes, despite assurances from McClintock that the bill would empower federal land managers to ban bicycles where appropriate. The Sustainable Trails Coalition, the California-based cycling group that recruited McClintock to the cause, has for years been seeking to open the Pacific Crest Trail to mountain bikes.

"This would redefine what wilderness means," said Mark Larabee of the Pacific Crest Trail Association. "It would forever change the experience people have come to expect from walking on the trail."

The International Mountain Biking Association., which represents 40,000 bicyclists, is siding with the more than 100 environmental groups opposed to the bill, against its San Diego chapter. The international group says keeping some lands off-limits to bikers is appropriate, and it focuses its work on collaborating with other conservation groups to increase access in places where mountain bikes do belong.

But the issue is a complicated one for avid bikers. The Wilderness Act, which was passed before mountain bikes existed, has been used in recent years to protect more and more land, sometimes pushing bikers out of areas where they had long ridden. President Barack Obama's designation in 2015 of the 275,000-acre Boulder-White Cloud region north of Sun Valley, for example, locked mountain bikers out of trails they once enjoyed.

In San Diego, mountain bikers complain that patchworks of inland wilderness designations are throwing a wrench into plans to complete multiple cross-county trails through the woods. "It's extreme and unfair," said Susie Murphy, executive director of the San Diego Mountain Biking Association. She says environmental groups opposing the McClintock bill are missing an opportunity to expand the draw of wilderness to a younger generation of outdoor enthusiasts eager to preserve the backcountry.

"In a lot of these areas, the mountain biking community would be amazing stewards," Murphy said. "If you don't get newer groups into these places to take care of them, how would anyone protect them from other uses that would be way worse than mountain biking, like mining?"

But outdoors advocates say there are far more productive ways to expand access to bikers than joining the Republicans' public lands crusade.

"People should not be fooled," said Michael Carroll, director of the Wilderness Society's People Outdoors Program. "The lawmakers supporting this are the same people pushing to shrink national monuments and drill the last bit of unprotected coastline in the Arctic. This would set the stage for other special interests to say: 'You rewrote the Wilderness Act for mountain bikes. What about our needs?'"

Carroll said other initiatives are already effectively expanding access to mountain bikers, as conservation groups and federal agencies. He pointed to a recent collaboration in his hometown of Durango, Colo., in which mountain biking organizations played an influential role in designing a large preserve. The "Recreation Not Red Tape Act" proposed by Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., would require federal land managers to prioritize expanding recreational opportunities.

"We have learned from our mistakes how to sit down together and plan," said Andrew Downs, a regional director of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. "The best way for the mountain bike community to get better rides and more trail miles is to work collaboratively."

The supporters of amending the Wilderness Act frame it differently. They talk of overzealous bureaucrats hijacking a law that was never intended to bar bicycles from public lands. McClintock pulled from the archives of speeches delivered by one of the Wilderness Act's sponsors, the late Democratic Sen. Frank Church of Idaho, whose words McClintock interpreted to express regret that outdoor enthusiasts like bikers were kept out of wilderness. Retired federal land managers interpret Church's words very differently.

In Humble Gratitude
SILVESTRE CEPEDA PALACIOS
Lovingly Known as "Bette Baliga"
We, the family of our late father, grandfather and great-grand-father †Silvestre C. Palacios, would like to express our gratitude to our family and friends that have shown their love, support, compassion and words of encouragement during our time of sorrow.
Our heartfelt appreciation to our friends and relatives who attended the nightly rosary, funeral mass and burial service – especially to those who traveled from off-island and to those who gave monetary donations and floral tributes.
Special appreciation to Father James Balajadia, Father Rey Rosal, the Bridge Investment Group, Jones and Guerrero Corporations in Guam and Saipan, SN-5 Enterprises, Mr. and Mrs. Romeo Diaz, the Honorable Mayor of Tinian and Staff, Mrs. Linda A. Decena, Tinian Delegation, Tinian Municipal Council, Mrs. Rosa P. Aquininqoc, Ms. Jennifer Pettis, Mrs. Lupe Hofschneider, and the Olomwaay Family Choir from Saipan, and families and friends that have contributed monetary and refreshments that was served during our viewing in Saipan. "Thank You All" for your services and support.
Thank you, Si Yu'us Ma'ase and May God Bless You All.
THE FAMILY

With Sincere Gratitude
†Jesus Hosono Sablan
"Jesus Mayor" and "Muming"
We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to family, friends and everyone near and far, who shared their thoughtful expressions of sympathy, who gave of their time and support, and who contributed in one way or another as we mourned the passing of our beloved Jesus. There are no words or actions that can truly express our gratefulness for all your love and good intentions.
Thank you to Fr. Jason Garanado, Fr. Jesse Reyes, Fr. James Balajadia, Fr. Isaac Ayuyu and all the altar servers; to Elaine Terlaje for leading the rosaries, the San Vicente Parish and choir, and the Thaddeus Choir for all the help they have provided.
We would also like to extend our appreciation to the Doctors, Nurses, and Staff of CHCC for their care and assistance while our beloved Jesus was in their care.
Jesus was a man who lived life to the fullest. His playfulness, positive energy and love of a great party will forever be missed, but also remembered.
Thank you and Si Yu'us Ma'ase
Helen, Children and Family

Life & Style

Media face challenges in rush to sexual misconduct reckoning

By DAVID BAUDER
AP MEDIA WRITER

In this April 27, 2016 file photo, Tavis Smiley appears at the 33rd annual ASCAP Pop Music Awards in Los Angeles. AP

NEW YORK (AP)—Talk-show host Tavis Smiley isn't just upset with PBS for firing him on sexual misconduct charges. He's upset about his depiction in the media.

Smiley believes that if he hadn't talked publicly about romantic relationships with subordinates at his company, the behavior that led to his downfall, the public would make little distinction between him and those who have been accused of sexual assault or rape.

Conflation of different forms of misbehavior—the idea itself is controversial—is one of the issues facing media organizations covering the fast-moving story of sexual misconduct that went into overdrive with investigations into Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein's behavior.

"The media is painting with too broad a brush," Smiley said. "We have lost all sense of nuance and proportionality in how we cover these stories."

Actor Matt Damon was torched for broaching the topic recently. He told ABC News that all accused men shouldn't be lumped together because there's a spectrum of behavior. There's a difference between a pat on the rear and child molestation, he said.

"Both of those behaviors need to be confronted and eradicated without question, but they shouldn't be conflated, right?" he said.

Actress Minnie Driver called Damon tone-deaf. Actress Alyssa Milano, who began a cultural movement by urging other women who have been harassed to proclaim #MeToo on social media, tweeted in reply that victims are hurt by all forms of misconduct. All are evidence of misogyny.

Still, as the rush of stories about misbehavior slows down—if it slows down—the point Damon raises will loom larger. Debate over the consequences of Sen. Al Franken's groping continues despite his resignation. The New York Times noted the difficulties in deciding whether to fire reporter Glenn Thrush following documentation of his unwanted drunken advances on women. Thrush was suspended and stripped of his White House beat.

The New York Daily News groups many of its stories about misconduct allegations under the tag "Perv Nation." The newspaper makes clear that not all allegations are the same, said Daily News executive Rebecca Baker, also president of the Society of Professional Journalists.

However, she said, "I don't think the media can tell people what to think or stop people from conflating things."

Society is in the midst of a debate over changing norms of behavior that's very intense and not very organized, said Nicholas Lemann, former dean of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. Distinctions can fall by the wayside with the temperature so high, he said.

"It's a good way for society to change its values," Lemann said. "It's a bad way to protect individual rights."

In Smiley's case, PBS agreed that his history of dating subordinates was the central issue in his firing. But a PBS statement also spoke mysteriously of "other conduct," giving no other details in order to protect the privacy of people who complained about him.

An unwillingness, or inability, to specify behavior that results in discipline can contribute to conflation. In firing reporter Ryan Lizza, the New Yorker magazine cited "improper sexual behavior." Lizza said his bosses mischaracterized "a respectful relationship with a woman I dated." Her lawyer disputed this, saying the relationship wasn't respectful, but wouldn't say why.

A television news producer recently dismissed because of his behavior is concerned that he will be lumped in with bad-behaving media men like Matt Lauer or Charlie Rose, and had his lawyer issue a statement saying his client was never "accused of any physical contact, language of a sexual nature or any sort of lewd conduct."

But how he's judged is ultimately out of his control, since neither employer nor employee will publicly say what the person actually did that cost him his job.

Early stories on misconduct cases—think the Times and New Yorker on Weinstein, The Washington Post on Rose and Roy Moore—were meticulously reported and have proven airtight. The challenge for news organizations is maintaining that rigor with more women coming forward to tell their stories and the pressure for scoops ratchets up.

"If you don't have one of these things really nailed down, it's a very bad thing for you," Lemann said. "Whoever gets one of these things wrong, it's going to be very embarrassing."

The story has already led to some unorthodox decisions. Vox.com assigned a woman who alleged harassment by Thrush, who said the incident still made her angry, to report and write on accusations by her and others. Having someone with a clear personal stake report such a sensitive story would make many news organizations squeamish, although no substantive questions have been raised about her work.

2 investors, including 'Twilight' backer, convicted of fraud

NEW YORK (AP)—Two tech entrepreneurs, including a man who invested in the film studio that made the "Twilight" movies, were convicted of fraud on Tuesday in New York.

A federal jury convicted Kaleil Isaza Tuzman, 45, and Omar Amanat, 44, of all charges after a six-week trial.

The convictions stemmed from the men's role in the technology startup Kit Digital.

U.S. District Judge Paul G. Gardephe revoked Amanat's bail after Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrea Griswold said he was a flight risk and that he could face over a decade in prison. Gardephe agreed a "substantial" sentence was likely.

The men were convicted of charges they deceived shareholders of Kit Digital from 2010 to 2012 by falsely inflating the company's revenues.

Gardephe said Amanat deserved immediate incarceration, citing evidence that Amanat had fabricated emails that he introduced at trial, demonstrating a "disregard and a disdain for the courts and legal process."

Amanat's attorney, Randall Jackson, urged Gardephe to keep his client on electronic monitoring and home detention, saying there was no actual loss of money in the case and that Amanat, a father of six children, deserved to remain free. In such cases, he argued, it was "extraordinarily rare" to be immediately jailed.

The Harvard University-educated Tuzman, born in Boston, will remain on electronic monitoring until sentencing. He was extradited from Colombia in July 2016. The former Goldman Sachs analyst was chairman and CEO of Kit Digital. He gained a measure of fame when he was featured in the film "Startup.com," which won the Sundance Film Festival Grand Prize in 2001.

In a release, Acting Manhattan U.S. Attorney Joon H. Kim said the men built Kit Digital "on a foundation of lies," defrauding investors "out of millions of dollars through years of deceit."

"The evidence of their criminal schemes was so overwhelming that Amanat actually tried to fool the jury by introducing fake emails into the record as exculpatory 'evidence' in this trial," Kim said. "Unfortunately for Tuzman and Amanat, the jury saw through their tangled web of lies, convicting them on all counts."

CHART TOPPERS

iBook charts for week ending December 24, 2017:

1. Darker by E L James - 9780385543989 - (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group)
2. Origin by Dan Brown - 9780385542692 - (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group)
3. The Rooster Bar by John Grisham - 9780385541183 - (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group)
4. Little Fires Everywhere by Celeste Ng - 9780735224308 - (Penguin Publishing Group)
5. Sinful Empire by Meghan March - 9781943796045 - (Meghan March LLC)
6. End Game by David Baldacci - 9781455586639 - (Grand Central Publishing)
7. Sweet Little Lies by Abbi Glines - No ISBN Available - (Abbi Glines Publishing)
8. The Last Mrs. Parrish by Liv Constantine - 9780062667595 - (Harper)
9. The Midnight Line by Lee Child - 9780399593499 - (Random House Publishing Group)
10. Sweet Little Memories by Abbi Glines - No ISBN Available - (Abbi Glines Publishing)

The top iPhone and iPad apps on App Store for the week ending December 24, 2017:

TOP PAID IPHONE APPS:

1. Heads Up!, Warner Bros.
2. Minecraft, Mojang
3. NBA 2K18, 2K
4. Bloons TD 5,Ninja Kiwi
5. Plague Inc.,Ndemic Creations
6. Bridge Constructor Portal, Headup Games GmbH & Co KG
7. Sonic Runners Adventure, Gameloft
8. Geometry Dash, RobTop Games AB
9. The Game of Life,Marmalade Game Studio
10. Getting Over It, Bennett Foddy

TOP FREE IPHONE APPS:

1. Run Sausage Run!,Crazy Labs
2. Dune!, Voodoo.
3. Go Plane,Voodoo
4. Rules of Survival, NetEase Games
5. Rush,Ketchapp
6. Pixel Art — Color by Number,Easybrain
7. Kick the Buddy, Chill Fleet
8. Fit, Ketchapp
9. Puzzledom, chengwei wu
10. HQ — Live Trivia Game Show, Intermedia Labs

TOP PAID IPAD APPS:

1. Minecraft, Mojang
2. Sonic Runners Adventure, Gameloft
3. Heads Up!, Warner Bros.
4. The Game of Life,Marmalade Game Studio
5. Geometry Dash, RobTop Games AB.
6. Bridge Constructor Portal, Headup Games GmbH & Co KG
7. NBA 2K18, 2K
8. The Escapists,Team17 Software Ltd
9. My Town : Shopping Mall, My Town Games LTD
10. Goat Simulator, Coffee Stain Studios AB (tie) Terraria, 505 Games (US), Inc.

TOP FREE IPAD APPS:

1. Pixel Art - Color by Number,Easybrain
2. Kick the Buddy, Chill Fleet
3. Rules of Survival, NetEase Games
4. Geometry Dash SubZero, RobTop Games AB
5. ROBLOX, Roblox Corporation
6. Dune! Voodoo
7. Bowmasters — Multiplayer Game, Playgendary
8. Dumb Ways To Die 3: World Tour, Metro Trains Melbourne Pty Ltd.
9. Subway Surfers, Kiloo.
10. WWE Mayhem, Reliance Big Entertainment UK Private Ltd

The top 10 movies on the iTunes Store for week ending December 24, 2017:

ITUNES MOVIES US CHARTS:

1. Dunkirk (2017)
2. It (2017)
3. American Made
4. Kingsman: The Golden Circle
5. Elf (2003)
6. Home Alone
7. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation
8. The Night Before
9. It's a Wonderful Life
10. Home Again (2017)

ITUNES MOVIES US CHARTS - INDEPENDENT:

1. Home Again (2017)
2. Stronger
3. Wind River (2017)
4. Brawl In Cell Block 99
5. Beyond Skyline
6. The Layover
7. The Killing of a Sacred Deer
8. The Ballad of Lefty Brown
9. Brad's Status
10. The Lost City of Z

T.I. helps mothers with last-minute Christmas shopping

AP
In this Sept. 17, 2016, file photo, T.I. performs during the BET Hip Hop Awards in Atlanta.

ATLANTA (AP)—Rapper T.I. spent Christmas Eve spreading holiday cheer among some single mothers, helping them with their last-minute shopping for gifts.

In a video T.I. posted on social media, the Grammy-winning artist entered an Atlanta-area Target on Sunday and called for all single mothers present to follow him. He strolled through the store alongside several mothers, went to the cash register with them and then paid for their Christmas presents.

T.I. says he spent $20,000 within a 30-minute stretch. He had to leave after that because of a flight.

This isn't the first time T.I. has surprised shoppers by paying for their gifts. He appeared at metro Atlanta stores around Christmas in past years to help mothers in need, including making two different stops at Walmart stores in 2016.

Branagh teases return of old friends in 'Death on the Nile'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kenneth Branagh is teasing the return of "old friends" in his planned sequel to "Murder on the Orient Express."

Branagh is expected to both direct and reprise his role as the fancifully mustachioed lead character Detective Hercule Poirot in "Death on the Nile," another mystery based on an Agatha Christie novel, which screenwriter Michael Green will return to adapt.

Branagh says he's excited to gather an ensemble cast that could possibly include bringing back some "old friends" to explore "primal human emotions" like "obsessive love and jealousy and sex" that make for a "very dangerous atmosphere."

The tense whodunit "Murder on the Orient Express" featured an all-star cast including Johnny Depp, Daisy Ridley, Judi Dench, Penelope Cruz and Michelle Pfeiffer. It was a global hit after its release in early November. Branagh says he was glad to see audiences responding to his quirky portrayal of Poirot and looks forward to seeing how that will evolve in the sequel.

Branagh

"One of the things that I liked—really loved doing here that the audience responded to was that Hercule Poirot, for all his intellectual power, got dragged into it, got dragged into feeling it. And I think it's a hell of a trip, that trip down the Nile. So I think it would be great to see how he, how his heart, responds to that kind of intensity," he said.

Christie's 1937 novel, "Death on the Nile," was previously adapted into a 1978 film starring Peter Ustinov, Bette Davis, Mia Farrow and Maggie Smith.

With a wealth of source material to draw from, Branagh also endorses the idea of a Poirot-slash-Christie "cinematic universe"—the popular term for a series of interlocking films that bring various characters together.

"I think there are possibilities, aren't there? With 66 books and short stories and plays, she—and she often brings people together in her own books actually, so innately—she enjoyed that," he says. "You feel as though there is a world—just like with Dickens, there's a complete world that she's created—certain kinds of characters who live in her world—that I think has real possibilities."

However, Branagh says he hasn't exactly floated that idea with any of the brass at 20th Century Fox.

"I bet they've been thinking about it though," he says.

"Murder on the Orient Express" will be released on home video in the coming months. "Death on the Nile" is in the early stages of preproduction.

Tilt! Old-school pinball is no longer old-school

ELK GROVE VILLAGE, Ill. (AP)—The old-school arcade game of pinball is resurging in popularity.

Interest has skyrocketed over the last decade or so, with the number of players and competitions growing worldwide, according to the International Flipper Pinball Association. There were 500 players in 50 competitions worldwide in 2006, according to the IFPA. In 2017, there were nearly 4,500 competitions and more than 55,000 players.

"Pinball is not going away," says pinball player Zach Sharpe, also the spokesman for the world's leading pinball manufacturer Stern Pinball, Inc. in Elk Grove Village, a Chicago suburb. "It can't be replicated and I think that's why it never truly goes away."

The first game ever patented was in 1871, but access to games stalled from the 1940s through the 1970s with some cities banning pinball because it was deemed to be gambling, according to Roger Sharpe, Zach's father, who wrote the book "Pinball!"

The elder Sharpe is known in the pinball world for convincing the New York City Council that the game is more skill than luck, leading to the city lifting its ban in 1976 and precipitating the removal of similar restrictions elsewhere.

Since then, popularity has ebbed and flowed. But Zach Sharpe says his company's revenue has shot up in recent years. This year revenue grew 30 percent over 2016 and 2016 was up 40 percent over 2015.

He attributes some of this growth to smartphone applications that show enthusiasts where to find pinball machines, video pinball and arcade bars.

The game attracts a variety of ages, including 14-year-old Escher Lefkoff, who at 13 won the Professional and Amateur Pinball Association's World Championships last spring.

"It was my day," he said recently at the Chicago Pinball Expo. "I played great that day and I won. It was the most magical moment of my life."

Husband loses desire for wife after witnessing her overdose

DEAR ABBY: I have been married for three years to a woman who is very beautiful inside and out. (We have been together for six years.) Recently, I found out she is addicted to pain meds—and two months ago she confided that she had gotten hooked on heroin.

I set up an intervention to get her into rehab. But when the time came to go, she kept putting it off. She said she wanted to get high "one more time," so I told her OK, as long as she did it at home, so I'd know she was safe. After she injected herself, she went limp, so I called 911 and got her into the hospital.

It is now two months later, and she is back. I love her dearly, but I no longer desire to be intimate with her. How do I tell her I will always stand by her, but no longer want to be intimate? She's younger and still has a strong sex drive.

LOST THAT PART IN THE EAST

DEAR LOST: The news should be conveyed in the office of a licensed marriage and family therapist. While your sexual problem may result from the shock of seeing your wife nearly die in front of you, there may be more to it. You say she is "younger and STILL has a strong sex drive." This suggests that you are older and your lack of desire might to some extent be age- or hormone-related.

The two of you have a lot of talking to do about your feelings and your future. It would be better if it's done with the help of a trained moderator.

Also, if your wife was sharing needles, you both need to be tested for any diseases she may have contracted.

DEAR ABBY: My parents and my wife's parents both live 20 minutes from us. Both sets of parents purposely moved to be close to us. The problem is both sets of parents tell people the few times we are together how often they see their grandkids—which is simply not true.

Mom talks as if she sees them multiple times a week, although she generally sees them less than once a month. She does watch my niece three days a week, but to hear her tell it, all her grandkids fall into that category. My wife's parents see me, my wife and our two kids about twice a month, but also tell others it's "all the time." Then, when we do meet, they ignore the kids!

I am bothered about it for two reasons: They are taking undue credit for "helping us out," and second, I'm sick of having heard for the last 12 years how "lucky" my kids are to have such wonderful grandparents. It caused us to miss out on help from extended family because they thought my wife and I were already receiving so much.

Is there a nice way to say to my parents/in-laws that the story they are selling is fiction? We do love them. All we would like is for them to help out the way they claim to.

SICK OF THE FICTION

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

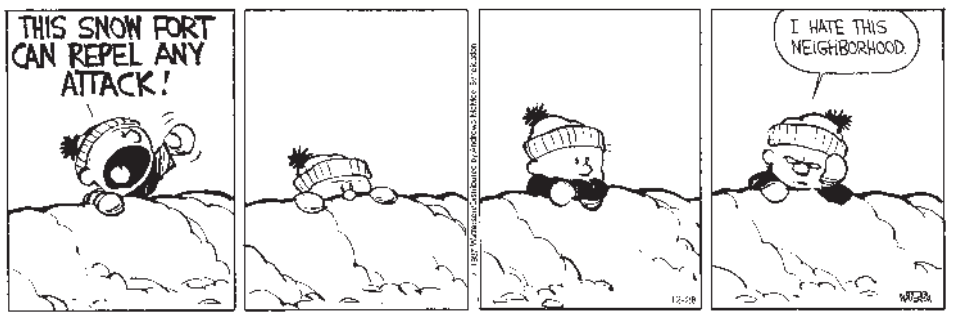
DEAR SICK OF THE FICTION: I find it strange that both sets of in-laws would relocate to be close, and then not follow through on trying to BE close. I also don't know why your parents would loudly take credit for the things they haven't been doing. If you want to end the fiction, tell the extended family the truth and explain that you really do need their help and why. You should have done it years ago.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $14 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



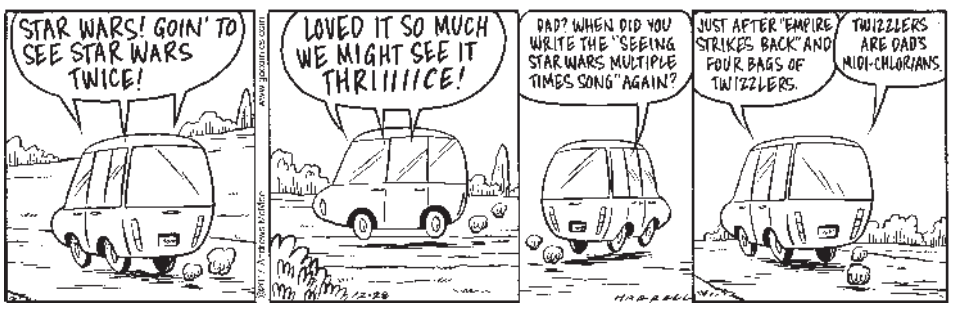
Garfield®

By Jim Davis

DID YOU LIKE MY HOMEMADE CHRISTMAS STUFFING, JON?
JIM DAVIS 12-28
BURP
GARFIELD DID
NEXT YEAR SHE SHOULD MAKE ENOUGH FOR YOU, TOO

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


STAR WARS! GOIN' TO SEE STAR WARS TWICE!
LOVED IT SO MUCH WE MIGHT SEE IT THRIIIICE!
DAD? WHEN DID YOU WRITE THE "SEEING STAR WARS MULTIPLE TIMES SONG" AGAIN?
JUST AFTER "EMPIRE STRIKES BACK" AND FOUR BAGS OF TWIZZLERS.
TWIZZLERS ARE DAD'S MIDI-CHLORIANS.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

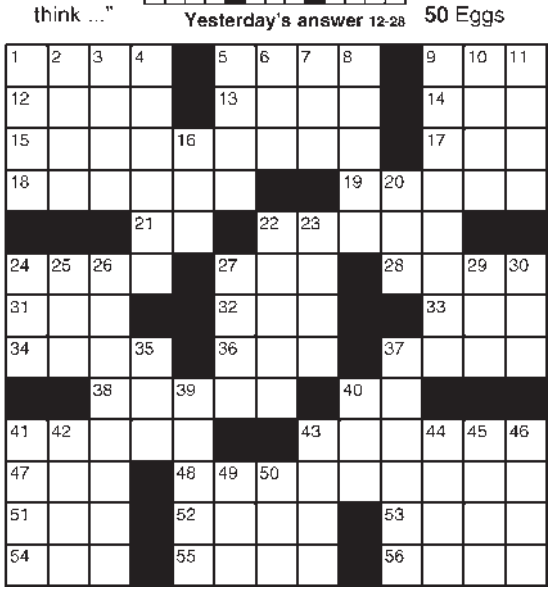
ACROSS
1 Castle defense
5 Pub orders
9 Proof letters
12 Actress Fisher
13 Marathoner's tempo
14 Submachine gun
15 Derek Jeter, for one
17 Branch
18 Spill the beans
19 Albacore and yellowfin
21 Room cooler, for short
22 Beet variety
24 Show ennui
27 Bill's partner
28 Babe in the woods
31 Rock's Brian
32 "Let me think ..."
33 Slugger's stat
34 Ashen
36 Soul, to Sartre
37 Church song
38 Islamic decree
40 Roman 51
41 Military group
43 Granny Smiths
47 "Evil Woman" gp.
48 Screech to a halt
51 Promptly
52 DVR brand
53 "Three Sisters" sister
54 Sawbuck
55 Crisp cookie
56 Conspiracy

DOWN
1 Fine spray
2 Job-safety org.
3 Oodles
4 Kilt pattern
5 Church area
6 Back muscle, briefly
7 Green prefix
8 Nasal partitions
9 Pickle
10 Poet Pound
11 Darkens
16 Patient's need, briefly
20 Ornate vase
22 Punctuation mark
23 Abode
24 "Uh-huh"
25 Santa — winds
26 Devour quickly
27 Tobacco plug
29 Co. that created Watson
30 Shark feature
35 Hearing thing
37 Kanye West's music
39 Exams
40 Vinyl records
41 Penny
42 Lotion additive
43 Per person
44 Lounge
45 Thus
46 Doc's "Now!"
49 Can material
50 Eggs

Solution time: 24 mins.

A	D	A	M	■	C	S	C	■	B	A	I	L
M	E	M	O	■	A	A	H	■	E	N	D	O
F	L	O	T	I	L	L	A	■	E	G	O	S
M	I	S	E	R	Y	■	O	B	T	U	S	E
■	■	■	T	I	P	■	S	O	L	I	■	■
H	O	T	■	S	S	W	■	T	E	L	L	Y
E	R	O	S	■	O	O	F	■	S	L	I	D
H	O	R	N	E	■	E	L	I	■	A	D	S
■	■	T	O	N	G	■	U	S	A	■	■	■
W	F	I	R	D	O	■	F	N	G	A	G	E
H	A	L	T	■	M	A	N	T	I	L	L	A
■	S	L	E	■	A	R	C	■	N	E	A	R
H	E	A	D	■	D	I	Y	■	G	E	M	S

Yesterday's answer 12-28



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Sienna Miller, 35; Denzel Washington, 63; Edgar Winter, 71; Dame Maggie Smith, 83.

Happy Birthday: Aim to stabilize your life personally, professionally and emotionally. Consider what you are up against and what it will take to overcome any setbacks that come your way. Sticking close to home and keeping a close, supportive group of people around you will help protect against unpredictable situations that can be costly. Patience, understanding and love will encourage good results. Your numbers are 4, 9, 16, 20, 26, 35, 42.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Learn from past mistakes and choose a path based on smart choices and personal growth. Question anyone who shows signs of inconsistency or an inability to make up his or her mind. Don't rely on someone else. Do your own thing. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Plan a day trip or do something special with a friend or loved one. Sharing your feelings with someone special will help you plan for the future. Updating your appearance will bring good results. Romance will improve your personal life. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Tidy up loose ends. Get your financial or legal matters in order. End the year knowing that you can start anew without having to backtrack. A tax break should be taken advantage of before the year comes to a close. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* What you do to help young people or those in need will bring you joy. Sharing your time and talents with those you love will open up a host of plans that will create strong bonds. Romance is highlighted. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Don't overreact no matter what happens. Keeping a steady pace and being of sound mind will be the best way to deal with any situation that arises. Avoid overindulgence or emotional arguments that will lead to regret. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Networking, socializing, family get-togethers and travel plans are all highlighted. Nurture personal relationships and discuss your plans for the future. Love and romance are in the stars and will improve your personal life. Don't hesitate to make a commitment. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Emotional unpredictability will surface if you don't keep busy and avoid getting into debates. Pour your energy in to personal changes that will help build your confidence and make you feel good about who you are. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Everything will begin to come together. You will gain support and be given the go-ahead to follow your dream. Broaden your horizons and set your plans in motion. Positive professional and financial changes are heading your way. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Physical changes and choosing a healthier lifestyle should be your intent. Set up a routine and choose an exercise program that will be easy to maintain. Romance is on the rise and nurturing an important relationship is encouraged. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Stick close to home and nurture the relationships that are important to you. Love and romance are highlighted and will make a difference in how your day unfolds. Use your imagination and mix the old with the new. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Added responsibilities may not be welcome, but doing your share will allow you to take extra time later in the week to spend with friends. Don't be indulgent and avoid overspending on items you don't really need. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Recap what you've accomplished this year and lay out a plan that will help you move into the next with greater hope and optimism. Consider the best way to earn more and spend less. Follow your heart. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are thoughtful, protective and traditional. You are possessive and helpful.

To submit astrological questions to the "Dear Eugenia" column, visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		7	2					6
	9		5					
8			7	4				
1	5	9						
		6				2		
						1	6	8
				8	1			5
					9		2	
7					5	4		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/28

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

1	5	2	4	7	6	9	8	3
9	6	8	5	2	3	4	7	1
4	3	7	8	9	1	6	5	2
8	2	4	7	6	9	1	3	5
3	7	1	2	5	4	8	9	6
6	9	5	1	3	8	2	4	7
2	1	9	3	4	7	5	6	8
5	4	3	6	8	2	7	1	9
7	8	6	9	1	5	3	2	4

Difficulty level ★★★ 12/27

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

WHAT IS CYCLO-CROSS? Solution: 7 letters

E	E	L	C	Y	C	I	B	E	L	G	I	U	M	G
K	I	T	S	E	U	G	A	E	L	I	C	U	L	R
I	S	S	O	R	C	O	L	Ⓒ	Y	C	D	O	E	A
B	U	N	N	Y	H	O	P	Ⓧ	H	D	V	T	M	S
D	R	G	N	I	C	A	R	I	Y	E	N	S	A	S
N	I	F	S	D	S	F	C	O	S	I	P	A	R	Y
A	D	R	K	S	A	A	T	L	W	I	I	F	F	N
L	I	A	I	L	G	N	L	F	T	C	R	E	W	N
R	N	N	L	O	U	I	I	L	S	F	G	R	O	E
E	G	C	L	O	H	U	A	E	S	S	U	O	G	V
Z	N	E	M	P	Y	N	L	A	L	Y	W	O	N	S
T	O	E	E	D	E	B	E	G	A	T	R	O	P	P
I	R	E	N	P	A	V	E	M	E	N	T	E	D	E
W	T	A	C	C	E	L	E	R	A	T	E	A	M	T
S	S	E	K	I	P	S	E	O	T	D	L	A	P	S

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Accelerate, Belgium, Bicycle, Bike, Bunnyhop, Cables, Chicago, Crew, CX, Cyclo-Cross, Daniel, Fall, Fast, Frame, France, Gloves, Gousseau, Grass, Grip, Kits, Laps, Leagues, Muddy, Passing, Pavement, Pit Lane, Portage, Racing, Remount, Riding, Sandy, Skill, Snowy, Speed, Steep Hills, Steps, Strong, Sven Nys, Switzerland, Team, Toe Spikes, UCI, Winter

Yesterday's Answer: All Aboard

To purchase the **WONDERWORD MILLENNIUM SERIES #1 or #2**, order online at: www.WonderWordBooks.com. (Contains 100 puzzles.)

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MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

MVA IS HIRING!!!!!!!!

Opening Date: 12/11/17 Closing Date: 12/29/17

JVA#17-015: **Administrative Assistant/Receptionist**
Location: Marianas Visitors Authority, Saipan

Interested persons may contact the Marianas Visitors Authority Office at (670) 664-3200/01 or visit www.mymarianas.com for more details.

Gemkell Saipan Corp. is inviting qualified U.S. workers to apply for the following positions:

Boutique Supervisor, Bottega Veneta (1)
High School Diploma or a GED with one (1) to two (2) years of related or applicable work and management experience in luxury retail environment. Must be able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends. Must be familiar with the POS System.

Sales Associate (5)
High School Diploma or a GED with prior work experience in luxury retail sales. Must be able to lift at least 15 pound items and carry it for at least 100 yards with or without using a trolley. Preferably fluent in both written and oral communication in the English and Chinese (Mandarin) languages. Familiarity with the POS System is preferred. Must be able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends.

Inventory Planner (1)
High School Diploma or GED with at least six (6) months retail experience and at least three (3) months of prior receiving, stocking and inventory experience. Must be proficient in Microsoft Office applications (Excel, MS Word, Outlook, Power Point). Knowledge on the following equipment: POS terminal, photocopier/facsimile machine, and other items as necessary to accomplish assigned tasks. Must be able to lift at least 15 pound items and carry it for at least 100 yards, with or without using a trolley, and move up to 50 pound items using a trolley. Must be able to drive Company provided vehicles. Must be able to bend, kneel, crouch, or crawl in awkward positions. Must be able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends.

Interested applicants may send their applications or resumes via email to gemkell_recruitment@tanholdings.com. To be considered, resumes/application documents must be submitted **not later than 5:00PM on January 10, 2018.** Applications for Employment are available at the Century Tours Office, Kanoa Resort. Background checks and pre-employment drug test will be required prior to employment.

Saipan Adventures Inc. dba Saipan Adventures invites qualified U.S. worker candidates to apply for the following positions:

Tour Sales Representative (2)
High School Diploma or GED with a minimum of six (6) months to one (1) year experience in travel or tour operation, sales or service related field. Able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends. Able to drive tourists safely through various tour routes. Preferred Fluent in both written and oral communication in the English and Chinese languages.

Accounting Assistant (2)
High School graduate or a GED Certificate. Some related work experience in tour operation, sales or service related work is preferred. Must be proficient with Microsoft Office applications such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel; and proficient with Accounting software such as the SAP-R3 FICO (Financial and Controlling) and POS-RMS (Point of Sale) systems to record, store, and analyze information. Flexible under pressure. High attention to detail. Able to work independently with detailed projects. Has an aptitude for learning. Must be able and willing to work evenings, holidays, and weekends.

Customer Service Agent (2)
High School Diploma or GED with at least two (2) months work experience in travel/tour operation or sales or service based work environment, room reservations and vendor relations. Must be proficient in Microsoft Office applications (Excel, MS Word, Outlook, Power Point). Preferably fluent in both written and oral communication in the English and Chinese (Mandarin) languages. Able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends. Able to drive tourists safely through various tour routes.

Customer Service Supervisor (3)
High School Diploma or GED. At least one (1) to two (2) years of related supervisory experience in a luxury retail environment. Must have the knowledge and computer skills to handle the POS register and other operations and communication systems.

To be considered, applications must be submitted **not later than 5:00 PM on January 10, 2018.** Applications for Employment are available at the Front Office of Century Tours Inc. located on the Ground Floor of Kanoa Resort, Beach Road, Susupe Village. Background checks and pre-employment drug testing will be required prior to employment.

Saipan Adventures Inc. Company is an Equal Opportunity Employer
Qualified Women, Minorities, Veterans and Persons with Disabilities are urged to apply.

Century Tours Inc. dba Century Tours invites qualified U.S. worker candidates to apply for the following positions:

Operations Manager, Tours (1)
College or Associate's degree in Management, Travel and Tour or any related field. At least three (3) years of progressive management experience in tour and travel operations is required. Fluent in both written and oral communication in the English and Chinese languages is preferred. Must be able and willing to work evenings, holidays, and weekends.

Operations Manager, Retail (1)
High School Diploma or a GED. At least two (2) years of prior related supervisory or managerial experience in a retail environment. Familiarity with the POS System is preferred. Must be able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends.

Business Development Director (1)
Bachelor's degree in Management, Travel and Tour, or any related field. Fluency in both written and oral communication in the English and Chinese languages is preferred as incumbent must be able and willing to travel between China and Saipan to serve as a liaison. Must be able and willing to work nights, weekends, and holidays.

Accountant (3)
High School graduate or a GED Certificate. Some related work experience in tour operation, sales or service related work is preferred. Must be proficient with Microsoft Office applications such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel; and proficient with Accounting software such as the SAP-R3 FICO (Financial and Controlling) and POS-RMS (Point of Sale) systems to record, store, and analyze information. Flexible under pressure. High attention to detail. Able to work independently with detailed projects. Has an aptitude for learning. Must be able and willing to work evenings, holidays, and weekends.

Tour Sales Representative (17)
High School Diploma or GED with a minimum of six (6) months to one (1) year experience in travel or tour operation, sales or service related field. Able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends. Able to drive tourists safely through various tour routes. Preferred Fluent in both written and oral communication in the English and Chinese languages.

Accounting Assistant (2)
High School graduate or a GED Certificate. Some related work experience in tour operation, sales or service related work is preferred. Must be proficient with Microsoft Office applications such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel; and proficient with Accounting software such as the SAP-R3 FICO (Financial and Controlling) and POS-RMS (Point of Sale) systems to record, store, and analyze information. Flexible under pressure. High attention to detail. Able to work independently with detailed projects. Has an aptitude for learning. Must be able and willing to work evenings, holidays, and weekends.

Customer Service Agent (4)
High School Diploma or GED with at least two (2) months work experience in travel/tour operation or sales or service based work environment, room reservations and vendor relations. Must be proficient in Microsoft Office applications (Excel, MS Word, Outlook, Power Point). Preferably fluent in both written and oral communication in the English and Chinese (Mandarin) languages. Able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends. Able to drive tourists safely through various tour routes.

Customer Service Supervisor (2)
High School Diploma or GED. At least one (1) to two (2) years of related supervisory experience in a luxury retail environment. Must have the knowledge and computer skills to handle the POS register and other operations and communication systems.

Inventory Assistant (2)
High School Diploma or GED with at least six (6) months retail experience and at least three (3) months of prior receiving, stocking and inventory experience. Must be proficient in Microsoft Office applications (Excel, MS Word, Outlook, Power Point). Knowledge on the following equipment: POS terminal, photocopier/facsimile machine, and other items as necessary to accomplish assigned tasks. Must be able to lift at least 15 pound items and move up to 50 pound items using a trolley. Must be able to bend, kneel, crouch, or crawl in awkward positions. Able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends.

Sales Associate, full-time (5)
High School Diploma or a GED with prior work experience in luxury retail sales. Must be able to lift at least 15 pound items and carry it for at least 100 yards with or without using a trolley. Preferably fluent in both written and oral communication in the English and Chinese (Mandarin) languages. Must be able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends. Familiarity with the POS System is preferred.

Sales Associate, part-time (4)
High School Diploma or a GED with prior work experience in luxury retail sales. Must be able to lift at least 15 pound items and carry it for at least 100 yards with or without using a trolley. Preferably fluent in both written and oral communication in the English and Chinese (Mandarin) languages. Must be able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends. Familiarity with the POS System is preferred.

To be considered, applications must be submitted **not later than 5:00 PM on January 10, 2018.** Applications for Employment are available at the Front Office of Century Tours Inc. located on the Ground Floor of Kanoa Resort, Beach Road, Susupe Village. Background checks and pre-employment drug testing will be required prior to employment.

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Qualified Women, Minorities, Veterans and Persons with Disabilities are urged to apply.

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Patriots remain on top in latest AP poll

NEW YORK (AP)—Heading into the final weekend of the regular season, Tom Brady and the New England Patriots have that familiar look that the rest of the NFL has grown accustomed to over the years.

Championship contender.

The Patriots remained No. 1 in the AP Pro32 poll on Tuesday , receiving 10 of 12 first-place votes for 381 points in balloting by media members who regularly cover the NFL.

New England (12-3) needs just a win or a Pittsburgh loss to claim home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs again.

"The road to the Super Bowl will undoubtedly go through Foxborough—again—now that the Patriots are one win away from clinching home-field advantage—again—in the AFC playoffs," Newsday's Bob Glauber said.

"Rob Gronkowski makes the Bills pay—again—for not drafting the hometown star tight end, as the Pats dominate Buffalo.

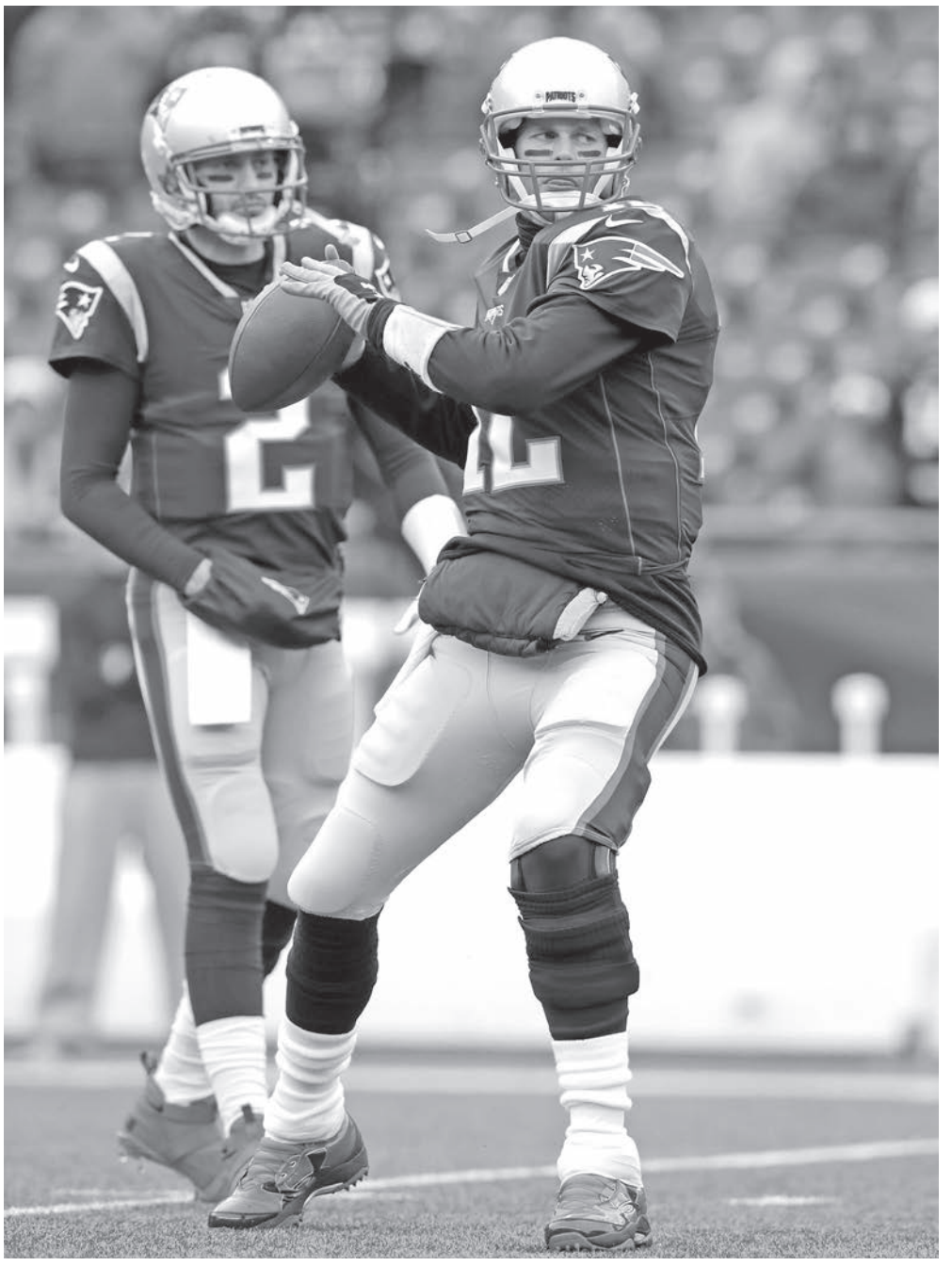
"All they need now to clinch the No. 1 seed is a season-ending win over the Jets—a layup if there ever was one."

The Pittsburgh Steelers and Minnesota Vikings, who received one first-place vote, are tied for No. 2.

"Don't think Ben Roethlisberger and company wouldn't relish a rematch against the Patriots, even if it's in Foxborough with a Super Bowl berth on the line," Ira Kaufman of SB Nation Radio said of the Steelers.

Despite having the NFL's best record at 13-2 and home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs, the Philadelphia Eagles, who received the other first-place vote, couldn't make up any ground and remained No. 4. The Eagles got past the Oakland Raiders 19-10 on Christmas night in a sluggish game.

"Doug Pederson probably has won Coach of the Year, managing to keep winning without Carson Wentz," said Charean Williams of Pro Football Talk.



New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, right, warms up beside backup quarterback Brian Hoyer before an NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills, Sunday, Dec. 24, 2017, in Foxborough, Mass.

"But the Eagles didn't look like Super Bowl contenders against the Raiders."

Another NFC division champion, the Los Angeles Rams, maintained its spot in the poll at No. 5.

"Keep hitting high notes," Fox Sports John Czarnecki said of the NFC West champions.

The New Orleans Saints and Carolina Panthers, tied for first place in the NFC South, followed at No. 6 and No. 7 respectively.

"It has to please Sean Payton how well the defense is finishing the season," John Clayton of 710-ESPN Seattle said about the Saints coach. "What a turnaround."

The Jacksonville Jaguars, set to host a playoff game for the first time since the 1999 season, remained at No. 8.

"Does anyone outside of Jags HQ trust Blake Bortles in the playoffs?" asked Alex Marvez of The Sporting News.

The Kansas City Chiefs (No. 9) and Atlanta Falcons flipped places from last week to round out the top 10.

Meanwhile, James Harrison is no longer the odd man out or the oldest man in the locker room.

The ex-Steelers star signed a one-year deal with the New England Patriots on Tuesday, three days after his unceremonious departure from Pittsburgh.

The 39-year-old linebacker posted a photo on Instagram showing himself with 40-year-old quarterback Tom Brady in New England's locker room, writing that he finally has "a teammate that's older than me!"

The AFC North champion Steelers released the five-time Pro Bowl linebacker and 2008 NFL defensive player of the year on Saturday to make room for right tackle Marcus Gilbert, who is returning from a suspension for violating the league's performance-enhancing substance policy.

"We make the decisions we feel give us the very best chance to win," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said Tuesday when asked why the team didn't release a different player to make room for Gilbert. "We needed the people we kept. We needed to activate Marcus Gilbert. Really, it's nothing more than that."

A day before, Tomlin had said following Pittsburgh's 34-6 win over Houston that clinched a first-round playoff bye that difficult decisions such as this are "just life in football."

To make room on their roster, the Patriots released linebacker Trevor Reilly.

Harrison, who is the Steelers' career leader in sacks, piling up 80+ during his 14 seasons with the Steelers and 82+ during his career, briefly retired in September 2014 following a forgettable 2013 season in Cincinnati but returned when the Steelers ran into injury trouble.

He collected at least five sacks every season between 2014 and 2016 and signed a two-year deal last spring that would have kept him in Pittsburgh through his 40th birthday.

But Harrison's playing time dipped significantly this season—he has just one sack. He was active in just five games despite being injury-free and with the Steelers turning more toward outside linebackers Bud Dupree and rookie T.J. Watt.

Seahawks show resolve in keeping playoff hopes alive

SEATTLE (AP)—All the built-in excuses were there for the Seattle Seahawks if they fell short.

Too many injuries.

Too much inconsistency.

Those factors still may end up being the story of Seattle's season if it's unable to find a way into the playoffs for a sixth straight year.

But the chances at the postseason were extended into Week 17 by winning at Dallas on Sunday. And while it wasn't pretty, the 21-12 win over the Cowboys may be one of the more gratifying wins of Pete Carroll's tenure after the Seahawks lost two straight, including a 35-point whipping by the Rams a week earlier.

If there was a question about Seattle's resolve, it seemed to be answered in Dallas.

"I thought it couldn't have been more obvious," Carroll said during his weekly radio show on KIRO-AM on Tuesday. "They were really disappointed in what had shown the last couple of weeks."

Seattle (9-6) still needs help to find its way into the playoffs. The Seahawks must beat or tie Arizona at home on Sunday and have Atlanta lose at home to Carolina for Seattle to squeak into the playoffs. Atlanta has the tiebreaker over Seattle because of a head-to-head victory in November.

Even if Seattle doesn't end up getting the help it needs, the win in Dallas at least made Week 17 relevant and continued a streak during Carroll's tenure of every home game since 2010 having some significance.

Whether it was early or late in the season, the Seahawks have never played a game at CenturyLink Field since 2010 that did not carry some weight to it.

Even the first year when Seattle went 7-9, the Week 17 home finale decided the division title.

Or the 2011 season when Seattle still had playoff hopes before losing 19-17 to eventual NFC champion San Francisco at home in Week 16.

Or all the years since when Seattle made the postseason but even those late home games carried significance for seeding or home-field advantage.

A loss to Dallas would have made the Week 17 finale against Arizona an odd and unfamiliar situation for Seattle.

"This team is not going to lie down easily. We could have easily taken the loss against the Rams, come back, pouted and moaned all throughout the week," linebacker K.J. Wright said after the win. "But we are a group of guys that love to play ball and we know that we are a talented football team."

Els invited to Augusta National, but not to play Masters

GEORGIA (AP)—Ernie Els says he received an invitation to Augusta National for the first week in April. It just wasn't an invitation to play in the Masters.

Els had to clarify a tweet from Sunday that said: "Thank you for a Great Xmas present! (at)TheMasters Can't wait!" That led several media sites to post stories that Els, a four-time major champion, had received a special exemption into the Masters.

Instead, the 48-year-old South African received a letter welcoming him as an honorary invitee. His five-year exemption into the Masters from winning the 2012 British Open ended last year. Augusta National has a tradition of inviting past major champions as honorary guests for the week.

Els tweeted Monday: "Wanted to clarify my excitement getting an invite from (at)TheMasters. Work continues to qualify to compete!

Augusta National occasionally awards exemptions to international players, but those typically are given to players who are not full PGA Tour members and have multiple avenues to qualify on their own. Among ways for PGA Tour members to qualify for the Masters are winning tournaments that offer full FedEx Cup points, reaching the Tour Championship or getting into the top 50 in the world ranking at various cutoff points.

"The inclusion of Honorary Invitees has been a great tradition at the Masters Tournament for many years," Augusta National chairman Fred Ridley said. "This coming year the list includes Ernie Els, and we are once again excited to welcome him and all of these distinguished guests to Augusta National in April."

The Masters pays homage to major champions more than any of the other majors by giving them special access as honorary invitees that includes two clubhouse badges, a $1,000 honorarium and a gift to commemorate them being there.

Honorary invitees used to be able to play practice rounds and compete in the Par 3 Tournament, a practice that ended last year.

Els failed to qualify for the 2012 Masters and was not given a special exemption.

Chandler's dunk sends Suns past Grizzlies

PHOENIX (AP)— Tyson Chandler dunked Dragan Bender's inbounds pass from the opposite sideline with 0.4 seconds remaining to give the Phoenix Suns a 99-97 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies on Tuesday night.

Bender threw a perfect pass and Chandler jumped over a defender to slam it down, though the play was reviewed by officials to see if there was offensive basket interference. After replay review, the basket counted, and Kobi Simmons missed the Grizzlies' last attempt to tie at the buzzer.

Devin Booker scored 32 points in his return from a three-week injury absence before fouling out in the final minute, but the Suns needed one final play after Jarell Martin slammed in a rebound with 0.6 seconds remaining to tie it at 97.

The Suns beat the Grizzlies in a tight game at home for the second time in six days after handing them a 97-95 defeat on Dec. 21. Phoenix has won four of its last six games while Memphis has lost nine of 11.

The Suns used a 13-0 run to turn a four-point deficit into a 91-82 lead midway through the fourth quarter. The Grizzlies went nearly six minutes without a point.

But Booker fouled out with 41 seconds to go and Memphis cut it to 96-95 when Tyreke Evans made a layup with 6.2 seconds left.

T.J. Warren scored 17 points for the Suns.

Evans had 25 points for the Grizzlies, who got 18 from Marc Gasol.

Booker hit his first shot of the game, a 16-foot jumper 13 seconds after tipoff. He made 9 of 21 shots and 11 of 12 of free throws.

The Suns used a 12-0 run to take a 21-10 lead in the first quarter, and led by 10 at the end of the quarter after handing out 11 assists. Alex Len's putback dunk of a missed shot with 2.6 seconds to play made it 29-19.

The Grizzlies trimmed the deficit to 57-53, at halftime. Booker scored 20 points in the first half.

AP

Phoenix Suns center Tyson Chandler, right, dunks the winning shot against Memphis Grizzlies forward Brandan Wright, back left, during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2017, in Phoenix. The Suns defeated the Grizzlies, 99-97.

Spurs 109, Nets 97

In San Antonio, the Spurs' first game with every player healthy and available went as the team expected.

There was some hesitation and a rash of early turnovers, but they grew comfortable as the game progressed.

Kawhi Leonard scored 21 points, LaMarcus Aldridge added 20 and San Antonio beat Brooklyn for its 15th straight win at home over the Nets.

"(The rash of injuries is) very unusual for us, but we still have a month and a half until the rodeo (road trip) starts," Spurs veteran Manu Ginobili said. "This is a good time to get everybody playing, everybody feeling good. Get Kawhi and Tony (Parker) back to their usual selves, back to their rhythm, feeling good and I think we are accomplishing that. Slowly, because they haven't been back for so long, but they are really showing progress."

San Antonio is third in the Western Conference at 24-11 despite being without Leonard and/or Parker for 30 games this season.

Aldridge has led the team during the duo's absence and his resurgent season has not slowed with their return. The 6-foot-11 forward was 7 for 15 from the field and had nine rebounds against Brooklyn.

"You know, obviously, watching (Aldridge and Pau Gasol) play and see them do the things they do for our team is great, and it inspires everyone on the bench, me, even guys playing," Leonard said. "But just with me, just taking it slow and trying not to skip any steps, like I said before, so I can be healthy down the road."

Playing in just his fifth game, Leonard was 8 for 17 from the field in scoring a season high. He made his first appearance in the fourth quarter, scoring four points in three minutes.

Mavericks 98, Raptors 93

In Dallas, J.J. Barea scored 20 points, including a clinching a layup in the final seconds, and the Mavericks ended another six-game winning streak by Toronto with a victory over the Raptors on Tuesday night.

The Mavericks held DeMar DeRozan and the Raptors to season lows in shooting percentage as Toronto lost for just the second time in 14 games, with each loss coming after six straight wins.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 18 points and fellow German Maxi Kleber had 15 points and matched his rookie season best with five blocks. Harrison Barnes had 16 points and 10 rebounds.

Kyle Lowry led Toronto with 23 points but didn't score in the fourth quarter, while DeRozan couldn't get going at all after averaging 37 points on a three-game road winning streak that ended.

Bulls 115, Bucks 106

In Milwaukee, Nikola Mirotic came off the bench to score 24 points in 28 minutes and the Bulls won for the eighth time in 10 games, beating the Bucks.

Chicago's surge coincides with the return of Mirotic, who missed the beginning of the season after suffering facial fractures in an October fight with teammate Bobby Portis.

Kris Dunn rebounded from a 1-for-12 shooting game Saturday against Boston with 20 points and 12 assists in 33 minutes for the Bulls.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 28 points and Eric Bledsoe had 22 to pace Milwaukee, which has lost five of seven.

Mirotic led Chicago's bench in outscoring Milwaukee's reserves 54-25. It was the second time the Bulls won at Milwaukee in 12 days, including a 115-109 victory on Dec. 15.

Pistons 107, Pacers 83

In Detroit, Tobias Harris scored 30 points to help the Pistons rout the Pacers.

The victory moved the Pistons (19-14) past the Pacers (19-15) and into second spot in the NBA's Central Division.

Andre Drummond added 21 points for the Pistons. Ish Smith (12 points) and Reggie Bullock (11) also reached double digits for Detroit.

Victor Oladipo led the Pacers with 13 points. Domantas Sabonis, Bojan Bogdanovic and Myles Turner each scored 10 points.

The win gave the Pistons a 3-1 decision in the season series between the two teams, the first time Detroit had won the season set from Indiana since going 4-0 against the Pacers in 2007-08.

Heat 107, Magic 89

In Miami, Josh Richardson scored 20 points, Wayne Ellington had 12 of his 18 points in a dominant fourth quarter and the Heat beat the struggling Magic.

Tyler Johnson added 17, Kelly Olynyk scored 15 and Goran Dragic had 14 for the Heat, who outscored Orlando 39-21 in the fourth—the biggest margin by Miami in a final quarter this season.

Hassan Whiteside returned from an 11-game absence with a bone bruise in his left knee, adding seven points and eight rebounds in 18 minutes.

Elfrid Payton scored 19 points for Orlando, which now has two separate nine-game losing streaks this season. The Magic started 8-4, and are 3-20 since.

Evan Fournier and Mario Hezonja had 14 apiece for Orlando, which got 12 from Marreese Speights. The Magic led by 10 in the third quarter, and got outscored by 28 in the final 20 minutes.

NBA admits officials missed Durant fouls on LeBron

The NBA's "Last Two Minute Report" released on Tuesday evening determined that LeBron James was in fact fouled by Kevin Durant on two of his crucial drives to the basket in the final two minutes of regulation.

James asserted as much in his postgame comments from the locker room while Durant objected to James' interpretation of the chain of events.

"I lost it on the left wing," James said. "He got me a little bit, but I lost that one. But obviously the overturned one, he fouled me twice. But, whatever. What are you going to do about it?"

Durant's response questioned the triviality of the contact he'd made, rather than if there he had fouled James.

"It felt clean. It's probably the same play a bunch of those dudes on Twitter probably arguing about at 24 Hour Fitness that that wasn't a foul. They've been in that position before, but just not on Christmas at the Oracle Arena," Durant said. "So they know. They know if they ain't call it it's not a foul. I'm sure if they get that call next week at 24 Hour Fitness, they're going to be pissed that they called a foul. So keep that shit on Twitter."

The final 1:42 was rife with controversy and according to the "Two Minute Report, " four calls were missed, including a trio of fouls by Durant and one on James. The first missed call occurred at the 1:12 mark when Durant engaged in body to body contact with James as he drove to the rim. At that point, the Cavs still trailed by one.

James' inclusion in the report as an offender was limited to his gripping on Draymond Green's arm as he pursued a rebound with approximately 33 ticks left. In contrast to the missed Durant fouls, the reaction tothis missed call was subdued. However, by impeding Green's ability to secure a rebound, the Cavs gained possession and led to the the controversial finish.

The ensuing possession was the most infamous sequence of the contest and the officiating report acknowledged that the refs missed not one, but two fouls by Durant. Durant's contact to the body of James at the start the drive with his forearm and the shooting foul seen below were both vital missed calls.

Sabathia's $10M deal finalized; Yanks' payroll up to $178M

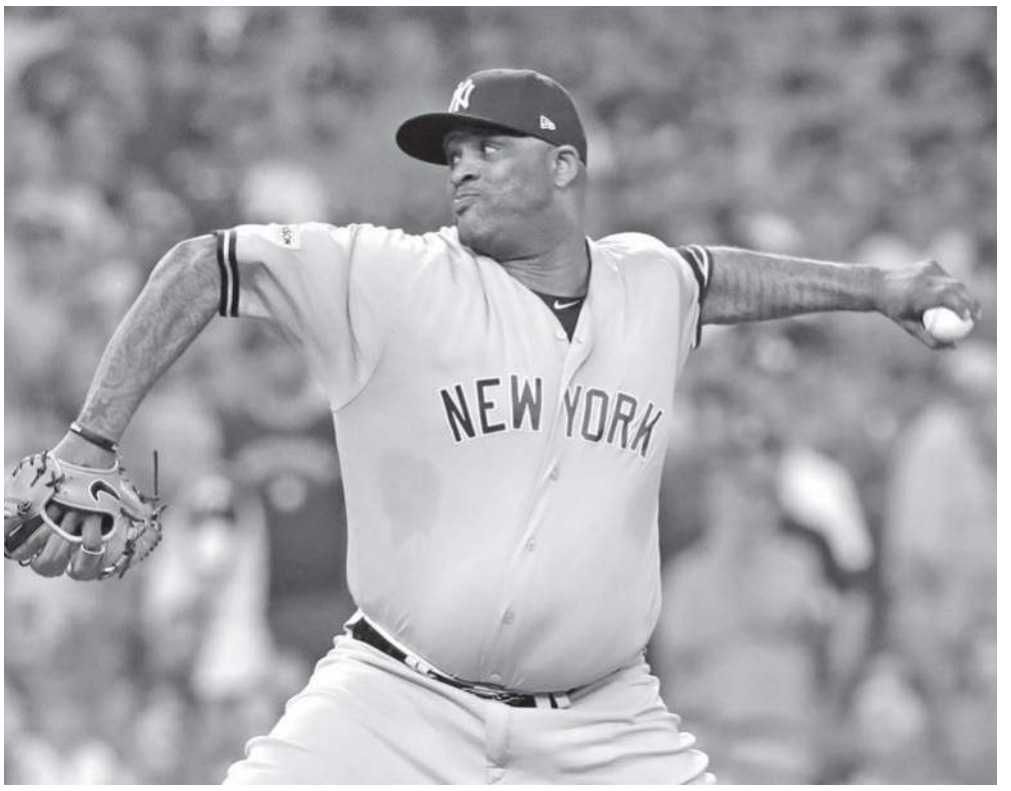
NEW YORK (AP)—CC Sabathia's $10 million, one-year contract has been finalized by the Yankees, a deal that raises New York's projected luxury tax payroll for next year to about $178 million.

The deal was announced Tuesday, about 10 days after the sides reached an agreement pending a physical. The 37-year-old left-hander is taking a pay cut from the $25 million he earned this year, when he went 14-5 with a 3.69 ERA in 27 starts for his best season since 2012. He was 9-0 with a 1.71 ERA in 10 starts following a Yankees loss.

Sabathia needs periodic injections in his surgically repaired right knee. The six-time All-Star is part of a rotation that includes Luis Severino, Masahiro Tanaka, Sonny Gray and Jordan Montgomery.

Sabathia is 237-146 with a 3.70 ERA and 2,846 strikeouts in 17 big league seasons with Cleveland (2001-08), Milwaukee (2008) and the Yankees, who first signed him to a $161 million, seven-year deal before the 2009 season. When Sabathia had the right to opt out after the 2011 season, the Yankees agreed to a deal that paid him $25 million in 2016 and included a $25 million option for 2017 that became guaranteed because he did not finish 2016 with a left shoulder injury.

Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner repeatedly has said New York intends to get under next year's tax threshold of $197 million, which would reset the team's base tax rate from 50 percent to 20 percent in 2019, the first season after Bryce Harper and Manny Machado are free agents. New York has paid tax annually in each year since the penalties began in 2003.



AP

This Oct. 21, 2017, file photo shows New York Yankees starting pitcher CC Sabathia throwing during the first inning of Game 7 of baseball's American League Championship Series in Houston. Sabathia's $10 million, one-year contract has been finalized by the Yankees, a deal that raises New York's projected luxury tax payroll for next year to about $178 million.

New York has seven signed players for next season whose salaries total $120.7 million for purposes of the luxury tax: Giancarlo Stanton ($25 million), Tanaka ($22,142,857), Jacoby Ellsbury ($21,857,143), Aroldis Chapman ($17.2 million), Brett Gardner ($13 million), David Robertson ($11.5 million) and Sabathia.

The Yankees have eight players eligible for arbitration whose projected salaries total $30 million: Dellin Betances, Gray, Didi Gregorius, Aaron Hicks, Tommy Kahnle, Austin Romine, Chasen Shreve and Adam Warren. The rest of the 40-man roster, which includes Aaron Judge, Gary Sanchez, Greg Bird, Severino and Montgomery, figures to add approximately $10 million. Each team will be charged a projected $14,044,600 for benefits and extended benefits.

In addition, the Yankees are charged with $3 million for cash transactions. They are credited with $3 million from Miami in the Stanton trade and are debited $5.5 million in the Brian McCann trade to Houston in November 2016 and $500,000 in the Chase Headley trade this month to San Diego.

New York likely would want to start the season $5 million to $10 million below the threshold, allowing the Yankees to add salaries with in-season moves.

Hughes, Reds agree to $4.5M, 2-year deal

CINCINNATI (AP)—Reliever Jared Hughes and the Cincinnati Reds have agreed to a $4.5 million, two-year contract that includes a club option for 2020.

Hughes gets $2,125,000 in each of the next two seasons under the deal announced Tuesday, and the Reds have a $3 million option with a $250,000 buyout.

He can earn an additional $750,000 annually in performance bonuses for games: $100,000 each for 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 and 50, and $75,000 apiece for 55 and 60.

A 32-year-old right-hander, Hughes went 5-3 with a 3.02 ERA for Milwaukee last season with one save in 67 appearances. He became a free agent when the Brewers failed to offer a 2018 contract by the Dec. 1 deadline.

Cincinnati hopes Hughes will provide help getting leads to closer Raisel Iglesias, who had 28 saves in 30 chances last season.

Hughes pitched his first six seasons in the majors with Pittsburgh. He has allowed 27 homers in 369 innings and has the 12th-best ratio of ground ball outs among major league relievers since 2011 -- attributes that should help him in homer-friendly Great American Ball Park.

Cincinnati's bullpen had a 4.65 ERA—second-worst in the NL to the New York Mets— last season. The rotation ranked last with a 5.55 ERA and 73 losses.

In Minnesota, left-hander Zach Duke and the Twins have finalized a one-year contract.

The 34-year-old was 1-1 with a 3.93 ERA in 27 relief appearances this year for St. Louis, returning to the major leagues on July 21 after Tommy John surgery in October 2016. He struck out 12 and walked six in 18 1/3 innings over 27 games, and three of the 13 hits he allowed were home runs.

He is 61-85 with a 4.54 ERA in 169 starts and 299 relief appearances over 13 major league seasons with Pittsburgh (2005-10), Arizona (2011), Washington (2012-13), Cincinnati (2013), Milwaukee (2014), the Chicago White Sox (2015-16) and the Cardinals (2016-17).

Minnesota announced the agreement Tuesday.

IRONMAN

From Page 28

we are expecting our Saipan event to attract more athletes in 2018 and beyond, especially as Ironman 70.3 Saipan is a qualifier for the 2018 Ironman 70.3 World Championship," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "The exposure value for The Marianas is tremendous with this new signature event."

An Ironman 70.3 is one of a series of long distance triathlon races organized by the World Triathlon Corporation. Ironman 70.3 features a 1.2-mile (1.9K) swim, a 56-mile (90K) bike ride, and a 13.1-mile (21.1K) run. Ironman 70.3 Saipan will offer 30 age group qualifying slots for the 2018 Ironman 70.3 World Championships that will take place in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The swim leg will be held in the crystal-clear waters of Pau Pau Beach, which will be closed to vehicle traffic for the day as it serves as both the start and finish lines for the event. The mainly flat bike course follows the western and northern coast of the island from the Bird Island Lookout to Pacific Islands Club Saipan. The run course features the quiet nature and historic and scenic sites of Marpi.

South Koreans Kwang Hoon Lee and Suk Hyeon Choi ruled the inaugural staging of Ironman 70.3 Saipan. Lee was the No. 1 overall finisher of this year's race and clinched the men's open division crown after clocking in at 4:46:19. Choi, on the other hand, timed in at 5:19:38 to take the women's tiara.

Meanwhile, in addition to Ironman 70.3 Saipan, the MVA will still hold the Saipan Marathon 2018 on March 10. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

ROUSING

From Page 28

for the GSM Ol'Aces, feeding Alliyah Fernandez and Jaime Pangelinan for the point-blanked shots.

Fernandez and Camacho finished with 14 points each, while Pangelinan and Anna Lei chipped in 12 and 10, respectively. Eleina, Kenty, and Deleon Guerrero combined for 18 more markers for the GSM Ol'Aces.

Jeraldine Castillo paced IT&E with her 16 markers, 6 of them came in the last two minutes of the first half to keep her team afloat at the break, 21-28, before the GSM Ol'Aces pulled away at the resumption of the match.

Meanwhile, the Ol'Aces and 670 Sonics XVI joined the GSM Ol'Aces on the opening day winners list.

In the first boys U18 division game, the Ol'Aces eased past the 670 Sonics XVIII, 69-56, while the 670 Sonics XVI outlasted the Ol'Aces Elite, 60-55, in overtime in the second tiff.

The 670 Sonics XVI knocked in important free throws in the extra period to slip past the Ol'Aces Elite. Aldrin Gio Dancel made three charities, while Clarenz Contreras had a pair and the last field goal for his squad. Earl Tabora and Ronald Bernardo also scored for the 670 Sonics XVI in overtime.

In the first boys U17 division game, the Ol'Aces drew double figures from their starters to rout the 670 Sonics XVIII.

Coby Santos registered 16 points, K.J. Kabiriel added 14, and Atan Aiferon, E.J. Abejo, and Dean Blake chipped in 11 each. With the Ol'Aces on target, they built a double-digit lead at the end of the first half, 44-31, and never looked back.

Besides the Ol'Aces, Ol'Aces Elite, and 670 Sonics XVI and XVIII, five other teams are entered in the boys U18 division: Sun Palace Hotel, 670 Sonics XVII, Ol'Aces Extreme, Kanoa Resort, and *Saipan Tribune*. *Saipan Tribune* is made up of female players training to represent the CNMI to the 2018 Micronesian Games in Yap.

In the girls division, Shirley's Coffee Shop, CTSI, Fiesta Resort, and *Marianas Variety* are the other competing teams.

BOYS DIVISION
First Game

Ol'Aces 79 — Santos 16, Kabiriel 14, Blake 11, Aiferson 11, Abejo 11, Ichihara 4, Peter 4.

670 Sonics XVIII 56 — Itaas 14, Manansala 8, Apasan 7, Tengco 6, Cobacha 5, Ordona 5, Diaz 2, Malasarte 2, Kintaro 2, Aque 2.

Scoring by halves: 44-31, 79-56.

Second Game

670 Sonics XVI 60 — Dancel 15, Contreras 12, R. Bernardo 9, Chavez 8, Favor 5, Lagmay 4, Tabora 2, Sablan 2, B. Bernardo 2, Mendoza 1.

Ol'Aces Elite 55 — Laxa 15, Kenty 14, Deleon Guerrero 8, Quitugua 7, Pangelinan 6, Soriano 3, Richson 2.

Scoring by halves: 26-26, 49-49, 60-55 (OT).

GIRLS DIVISION
First Game

GSM Ol'Aces 66 — Fernandez 14, Camacho 14, Pangelinan 12, An. Santos 8, E. Santos 6, Kenty 6, Deleon Guerrero 6.

IT&E 35 — Jeraldine Castillo 16, Pena 12, Marasigan 5, Hemley 2.

Scoring by halves: 28-21, 66-35.

ADA

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repair work will be the Ada Gym and at this early, we would like to inform the public that once the project starts, we will have to close the facility. We're hoping that the Ada Gym repair work could start in the first quarter of the year," Rogolifoi said.

Besides the Ada Gym, Rogolifoi said the restroom and conference room will also undergo a facelift, while the next stages of repair work will be done at the grandstand of the complex, the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield, and the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Pangelinan Ballfield.

As for the track and field facility, the NMSA official said it remains closed to the public although the repair work at the oval is done.

"We still need to work on the field for safety reasons. Tomorrow (today), we will have people bringing in an appropriate equipment for tilling. There are surfaces that are too hard to till," said Rogolifoi, who thanked Laolao Bay Golf and Resort management and staff and the Department of Lands and Natural Resources' Division of Agriculture for their assistance in the tilling process.

Repair work at the Oleai Sports Complex is needed as the CNMI prepares for hosting two major competitions, starting next year. Saipan will host the 2018 Micronesian Athletics Championships and the 2021 Pacific Mini Games.

M-League Division A Finals

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

TanHoldings Football Club players pose with the perpetual trophy after beating the Teen Ayuyus, 2-1, in the Division A finals of the M-League last Saturday at the Hopwood Middle School Field.

TanHoldings FC players celebrate their title conquest.

TanHoldings FC's Mareko Tekopua, left, kicks the ball, while the Teen Ayuyus' Jonathan Capayas attempts to block it.

The Teen Ayuyus' Anthony Fruit, left, intercepts a pass intended for TanHoldings' Martin Jambor.

The Teen Ayuyus' Thaiphi Austria, left, beats TanHoldings FC's Mark Esalan to the ball.

The Teen Ayuyus' Sunjoon Tenorio, left, goes for a kick, while TanHoldings' Kautong Omengkang stays close on defense.

TanHoldings FC's Lukas Jambor, left, the Teen Ayuyus' Jonathan Capayas nudge each other as they battle for possession.

TanHoldings FC and Teen Ayuyus players trade high-fives after their title match.

Patriots remain on top in latest AP poll

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Chandler's dunk sends Suns past Grizzlies

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Rousing debut for GSM Ol'Aces

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

GSM Ol'Aces, in red tops, and IT&E players battle for the loose ball during their game in the girls division of the 2017 TanHoldings Christmas Basketball Tournament yesterday at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The GSM Ol'Aces had a resounding debut in the 2017 Tan-Holdings Christmas Basketball Tournament after crushing IT&E, 66-35, in the opening game in the girls division yesterday at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

The GSM Ol'Aces broke away in the second half, using their height advantage and speed to get away with easy baskets en route to their 31-point winning margin

The John Santos-coached GSM Ol'Aces had Twin Towers Anna Lei Santos and Cassie Camacho manning the paint and cherry-picking inside against the much smaller frontline of IT&E. The winning squad also had another tall player in Taz Deleon Guerrero, while Eleina Santos did a good quarterbacking job

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Ada Gym first to get needed facelift

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium will be the first facility to undergo repairs next year.

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Japan's Uda Hideki heads out of the Bird Island Lookout during the inaugural Ironman 70.3 Saipan held last March 11, 2017.

Ironman 70.3 Saipan set for Oct. 27

Ironman 70.3 Saipan will return this year and will be held on Oct. 27.

The event made its debut here last March 11, attracting 181 participants from 20 countries. Marianas Visitors Authority and Kiyokazu Fitness Club of Japan, organizers of the event, expect to have more participants this year.

"Both Japan and Korea have many triathlon races in the summer season of June, July, August and September, so it would be difficult for them to participate in Ironman 70.3 Saipan during the summer season. We believe October is the best," said KFC president Kiyokazu Onishi. "We expect to get over 400 participants in Ironman 70.3 Saipan 2018."

Online registration will open on Feb. 1, 2018 at www.ironman.com.

"Ironman is a world-renowned brand, of course, and

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By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The repair and renovation work at the Oleai Sports Complex next year will begin at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium, according to Northern Marianas Sports Association executive director Tony Rogolifoi.

"We just met with the Public Assistance Office early last week and we were told that paperwork for the Ada Gym project is ongoing. They had the first pre-bid announcement last month and the second one either on Jan. 3 or 10," Rogolifoi told *Saipan Tribune*.

PAO, which is under the Office of the Governor, is taking care of the documents needed to proceed with the project, as the Federal Emergency Management Agency coursed through the fund for the sports complex's repairs to the former. FEMA approved $505,220 in public assistance funds for the sports facilities damaged by Typhoon Soudelor in 2015.

Rogolifoi said the repairs at the Ada Gym will make up the first phase of the project. Its entire flooring will be replaced, insulation of the ceiling will be repaired, and the interior walls will be repainted. Two new scoreboards, which were already shipped here last month, will be installed, while NMSA is still waiting for the new sound system.

"For now, the focus of the

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